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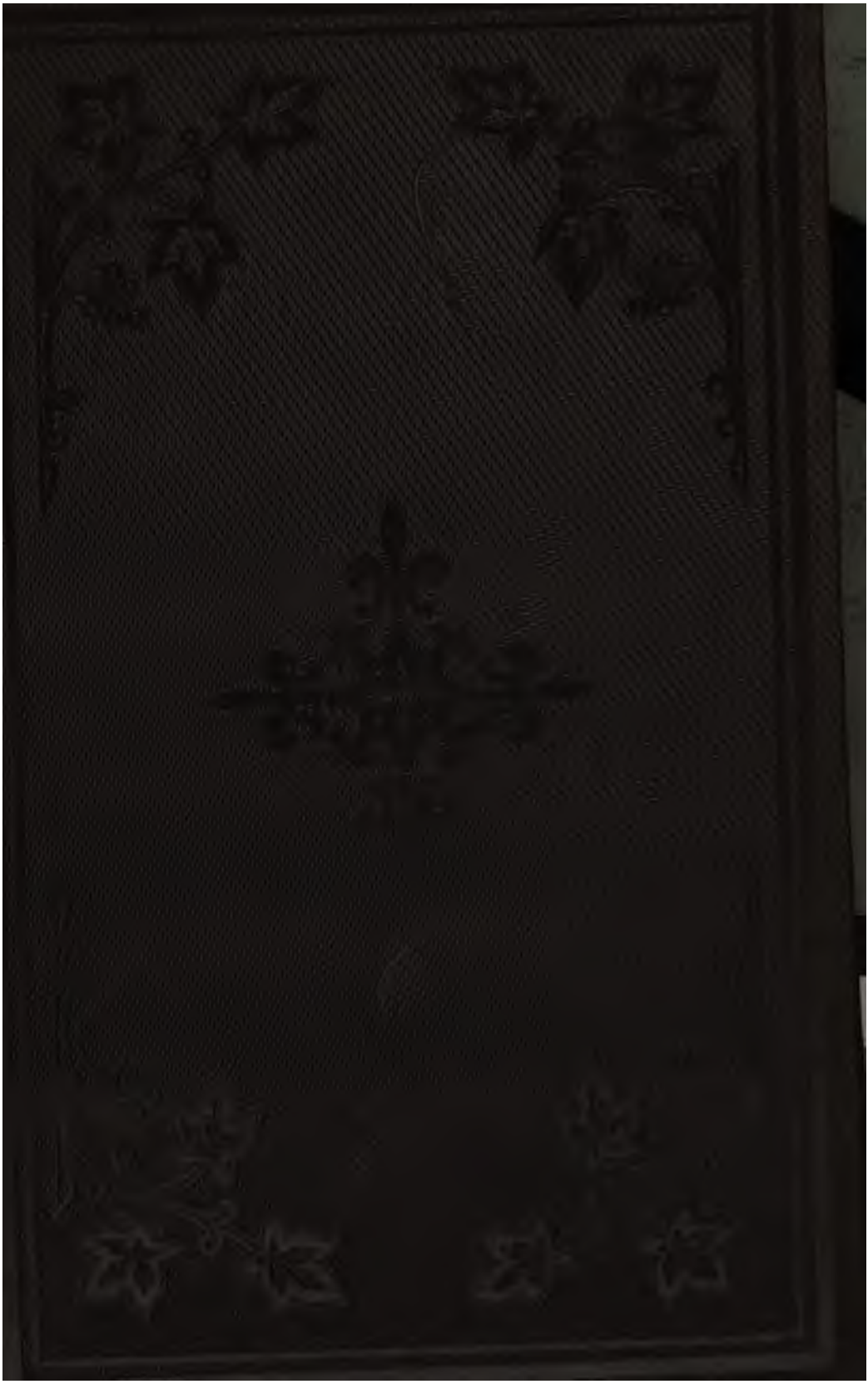

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THEOLOGICAL WORKS

BY

FRANCIS TRENCH,

RECTOR OF ISLIP, OXON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

SERMONS.

SERMONS

ON THE

PERSON, WORDS, AND WORKS

OF

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,

BY

FRANCIS TRENCH,

RECTOR OF ISLIP, OXON.

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SERMON I.

SERMON I.

CHRIST THE LIVING WORD.

JOHN I. 1.

In the beginning was the Word.

IT has pleased God to make Himself known to us by a great variety of titles and names, which we can understand—which suit our capacity and feelings, very many of them being taken from His acts and works regarding us—e. g. Maker, Father, Saviour, Comforter. For this there must certainly be a full and adequate cause. Surely it is not without full and adequate cause that, at one time, God appears to Abraham, saying, "I am the *Almighty* God[a]." Surely, again, it is not without cause that when God appears to Moses, He saith, in answer to the inquiry for His name, "I am that I am,"—all this being expressed in the word *Jehovah*, as explained by God Himself. For "God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them[b]." Surely this great variety of titles, which God condescendingly employs in the

[a] Genesis xvii. 1. [b] Exodus vi. 2, 3.

Scriptures, towards enabling us to apprehend and grasp His attributes, His essential character, and His dealings with men, are of the very highest importance; and whosoever not only understands in his mind but feels in his heart the power of these names must be a Christian indeed—must be one really enlightened from above by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We have now before us a very remarkable title of our Lord Jesus Christ: and on that title, as well as on the other subjects connected with the passage, in which this name is proclaimed to the church, I shall endeavour, by God's blessing, to speak.

"In the beginning was the Word." Such is the introductory sentence of this Gospel, penned by that apostle and evangelist "whom Jesus loved," who was favoured by most intimate communion with Him, and by the capacity to bear witness to the spirit, words, and acts of his Master, in so many things of which he alone of the four evangelists speaks.

"In the beginning was the Word." This passage may perhaps be said to fathom the past eternity—to go back as far as any passage in the Old or New Testament. It certainly goes much further back than the creation of the world, as described in the first chapter of Genesis. "In the beginning was the Word." I shall presently expound this title, the Word, as of course signifying Christ; but first let us see what is meant by the expression. "in the beginning!" What

again is meant by the verb "was." For short, common, simple as these words are, much deep meaning is in them. "In the beginning" then means from all past eternity—"before the foundations of this world were laid"—before sun or moon shone—before angel lived, or any other creature in all the dominions of God. We can go no further back. Our bounded capacity will not admit of our fathoming that eternity, either future or past, which God inhabiteth, and which is coeval with God. But in all this eternity God was, is, and will be—filling it out with his Divine fulness, as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Rightly therefore speaks the Athanasian Creed, "The Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate." And now we shall see the force of this expression "was." *Was* is the imperfect tense, grammatically and truly, of the word "to be." And *to be*, accurately speaking, (which accuracy is ever most solemnly required of us, and most richly rewarded to us in considering the Person of Christ,) *to be* (I say) means to exist, of God's own self, in all time past, in time present, and in all times to come. Now this can be said of none other but God. All creatures, which live or ever have lived, had their life and beginning from God—were made by Him. None of them existed inde-

pendently, or "in the beginning." It could not be said of the highest angel—of a Michael, or a Gabriel, or of the noblest principality in heaven, that he "was in the beginning." This belongs to God, and to God only. A short saying of our Saviour illustrates this truth—in a manner too remarkably strong and clear to all who know that original language in which the Gospels are written. In the eighth chapter of St. John much is said about Abraham. In the 56th verse, Jesus, of right taking to Himself the honours due to Him, as God the Son, thus addresses the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad." This perplexed his opponents. They, cavilling, exclaimed, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Then "The Lord of glory" takes to Himself the same title as He gave Himself in the "burning bush:" Πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι, ἐγὼ εἰμί: "Before Abraham was, I am." In our English translation, the word *was*, and the words *I am*, are two tenses of the same verb; and thus the force of the declaration is very much lost, or at all events weakened; but, in the rich and copious language of the Greek, two very different words are used; and the declaration runs thus: "Before Abraham was born, I am, or I exist." Now the use of this expression by Jesus Christ was nothing less than taking to Himself divinity, as of course was the right, the title, and the true prerogative of Christ. The Jews understood the claim—saw it clearly, but in their unbe-

lief they would not admit it. These short words exasperated them to the uttermost. They would no longer speak or argue with the Lord. But by their act they charged Him with blasphemy: "They took up stones to cast at him[c]."

The passage, thus quoted and explained, bears very closely on the language of our text—"In the beginning was the Word"—not born, not made, not created, but self-existing, the Jehovah, or God.

We may now proceed to consider how the Son of God is styled and entitled "the Word"—according to that glorious appellation given by the Holy Ghost, in this distinct manner, unto John alone among all the writers of the Scripture, whether in the New Testament or whether in the Old. We find the title in the first Epistle of St. John—and in the nineteenth chapter of Revelations, (written also by St. John,) at the thirteenth verse, where Christ is described as coming in His future glory, crowned with "many crowns," and "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood"—and where it is added, without a possibility of doubt as to the application,—"and his name is called, *The Word of God.*"

The Son of God is called *the Word*, because through Him God the Father Almighty speaks His mind, and makes known His will, and tells to us every thing concerning Himself, which it is needful and good for us to hear and to know.

[c] According to the law of Moses on the punishment of blasphemy. Compare John x. 31—33.

It is written in the eighteenth verse of this first chapter of St. John. "No man hath seen God (that is, God the Father, the unapproachable Spirit) at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"—that is—told Him out[d], made Him clear and evident to man, as Jesus saith elsewhere: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." It is asked in the Epistle to the Corinthians; "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God[e]." This is plain to the most ordinary capacity. While our thoughts are retained and reserved in our own mind, nobody can tell of what we are thinking—what we are intending to do—what designs we may have—what objects are ours. Our acts must shew what is going on within us; or our words must tell our feelings and intentions, before our fellow-creatures can know any thing about them. So the Lord God Almighty, in His purposes and will, must and would have been utterly unknown to us, had He not made Himself known to us by acts and words, speaking to our minds, our hearts, and our senses. Had He not put forth these acts—had He not spoken these words, He would have remained (according to the language of Paul, when writing to Timothy) "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto[f]," any more than we could look straight into the middle of

[d] ἐξηγήσατο. [e] 1 Cor. ii. 11. [f] 1 Tim. vi. 16.

the sun. He would have remained as one, whom "no man hath seen, nor can see." But God has spoken to us in act and deed, and thus manifested Himself: as we find it written. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead[g]." But this is not all which God has done for us, that we might know Him, and love Him, and be saved. He has given us another revelation of Himself, besides that of His outward and visible works. He has spoken unto us, not in the language of nature and creation only, but in revealed religion. To reveal means to uncover—to throw back a veil, which hung previously over any object or sight. So God has revealed Himself and His will "at sundry times and in divers manners," by raising up and instructing prophets and other living instruments of His hand, that they, being inspired, and taught, and commanded by Him, might communicate His will generally to mankind. Of this number were such men as Enoch, (who prophesied of Christ's second coming[h],) and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and the Judges, and Samuel, and David, and all who have ever acted in the world by special messages and inspiration of God—all who have ever spoken by the Holy Ghost, and all who have written and handed down the sacred pages of history, prophecy, song, doctrine, precept, and rule—yes, all that which our Bible

[g] Rom. i. 20. [h] Jude 14, 15.

contains from the beginning to the end. Thus we may see two quite distinct methods, which God in His goodness, wisdom, and power, has adopted for us, that we might not live in that awful state, "without God in the world"—in the "thick darkness," which must envelope all godless creatures, subject here to Satan and to sin, and after this life lost for ever and ever.

Nevertheless had it not been God's purpose and will to speak unto us in another way—in a higher way still—it is not only a fact that creation would have had no voice which we could apprehend for our good, but it would have been the same with revelation too. In that case no prophet, no messenger, no angel, no living instrument in God's hand would ever have uttered or written one single word, or performed one single deed upon earth for the restoration of guilty fallen man. Yes, these voices of creation around—yes, these voices of earlier revelations unto man, were the harbingers, only the distant yet approaching sound of God's love and mercy through Jesus Christ our Saviour—were only a preparation for His speaking to us by the person, by the acts, and by the voice of the Word—even the incarnate Word, God's only begotten Son. "Having one Son, His well-beloved, He sent Him also into the vineyard." "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all

things, by whom also He made the worlds[1]." There would have been no creation at all had it not been for Christ—no creation to speak aloud of God. This is no high fanciful statement unfounded on Scripture. By no means. It is written in the first of Colossians, sixteenth verse, of God's own "dear Son," that "by Him were all things created"—and at the end of the verse it is added, that not only "all things were created by Him, but for Him:" and in that beautiful passage about Christ, entitled Wisdom, in the eighth of Proverbs, He is described, even before the foundation of the world, as prospectively "rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth: and His delights were with the sons of men." I have said, that had it not been for Jesus Christ our Lord, there would have absolutely been no creation of the earth at all, to speak the glory and tell the power of God. And far more plainly must it be evident to every observant mind, that had it not been for the same Lord Jesus Christ, there would have been no such thing as revelation—no such thing as the declaration of God's will and character by angels and by men—no such thing as the Scripture—i. e. the written Word. For surely all revelation—and all the written Word is just the account of the grand remedy for sin, of those means through which fallen man is to be raised again, sinful man again made holy, the defaced image and likeness of God renewed in him once more. "The testimony

[1] Heb. i. 1, 2.

of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Jesus, as the Word, speaks the mercy of God. He, as the Word, speaks the justice of God. He, as the Word, speaks the holiness of God. He, as the Word, speaks the power of God. He, as the Word, speaks pardon, peace, and comfort to our souls. He speaks to us by His life. He speaks to us by His death. He speaks to us in the day of His humiliation. He speaks to us by His resurrection, and by His ascension. He speaks to us from the right hand of God, as our Mediator and Advocate. And He will come again in His glory, speaking to the quick or living saints, that they may be made like unto Himself, and speaking to the dust of His saints, that it may arise to put on immortality.

I might dwell at much greater length on the Son of God, under His title the Word—both on the Word, who was in the beginning, and on the Word, when incarnate upon earth. And some perhaps might wish for still deeper search into these glorious and spirit-stirring mysteries. But I think that what has been said is sufficient for my purpose now. I have endeavoured to set forth high and heavenly truth in the very plainest language. A poor subject may need fine and ornamental words to render it attractive. But all such decoration is worthless, when Jesus and His Gospel is preached—when it is our privilege just to set forth and explain such a doctrine as that of our text; "In the beginning was the Word."

It only now remains that we should make a practical use of the doctrine here contained. Happy will it be for us, if we are enabled so to do, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, taking the things of Christ, and bearing within us fresh, gracious, and strong testimony to the power of His saving name. Let me just point out how Scripture employs the doctrine of Christ as the Word. The first passage to which I shall direct your attention, is a quotation from the Old Testament applied to Christ in the New. "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people[k]." Thus did God instruct Moses; and thus did Moses instruct the people committed to his charge, concerning Christ the Word—the great interpreter of Himself—"God manifest in the flesh," who in due season would visit this earth with a proper human tongue, with human tones, with human gesture, with acts and deeds done in His human body on the earth. And when that full time arrived, that He, thus prophesied, should actually come down from heaven and dwell among men, then over Christ's head the voice from above—the voice of the Father was heard, calling on mankind, and saying to mankind in all places and times, "This is

[k] Acts iii. 22, 23.

my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him[l]." One more quotation on this matter will suffice. It is a passage of the utmost importance and solemnity. You will find it in the first four verses of the second chapter of the Hebrews. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, let at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?" Now shall we—can we hear such an appeal as this, and turn a deaf ear to the warning voice of Jesus Christ the Word—the very Son of God? Shall we not seek to be instant partakers in those unspeakable and rich privileges all assured to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ by His own declaration. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life[m]." When John heard the voice of the Bridegroom, he "rejoiced greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice[n]." Shall not we also rejoice, inasmuch as the sound of the Gospel of

[l] Matt. xvii. 5. [m] John v. 24. [n] John iii. 21.

Jesus Christ has reached our ears, as it has gone forth unto the ends of the world? Shall we not say with the bride in the Canticles, exulting, and springing up, and exclaiming joyfully: "The voice of my beloved[o]!" Shall we rest satisfied one day, one hour, one minute longer, without being numbered among the good Shepherd's flock, of whom He saith, "knowing all His sheep by name," "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand[p]." What glory, even now, rests on all who know and follow Christ! Ungodly men can see glory in all kind of carnal things, and some of them, things of which they should rather be ashamed. Unconverted men can see the glory of mere human deeds. And further still. They can see a glory in the firmament, in the brightness of the sun by day, and in the star-spangled canopy of heaven by night. They can see a glory in the mountains and the forests of the earth—in the rolling sea and in the flowing streams—in the flower of the garden and in the autumnal riches of the field. But this is not all. They can see a glory in the works of a Creator, and say perhaps beautiful things about Providence, and about the Almighty, as the Maker and Preserver of the universe, and indeed about God in every other light, except as manifest in Jesus, the Redeemer of souls through His blood, and speaking to the

[o] Cant. ii. 8. [p] John x. 27, 28.

church in His own Person, as the Word. But they understand not nor enjoy this truth of truths. It is far above out of their sight. Such a God is not in any of their thoughts. To a voice like this, sounding from earth once, and sounding from heaven now, they have no response. Their ears are dull of hearing. Their hearts are closed to such an appeal as that of a Redeemer dying for their sins on the cross. It is either coldly disregarded; or, when pressed upon them, it offends, and proves to them a special stumbling-block. The real language of their hearts is, "Any other religion but that." Who that is acquainted with the world and its ways will doubt or deny this? And many, no doubt, will remember the time when they thus treated the peculiar doctrines of grace, and were filled with prejudice against that pure and simple Gospel of Christ, in which now they greatly rejoice, and which they now embrace as all their hope, all their salvation, all their desire! God be praised, many such changes are ever taking place — some more slowly—some more speedily, but all surely, if God is in them. Happy are those in whom they take place at all! Happiest and wisest are they who catch and hear the voice of the Saviour earliest in life and with the least delay! He, the glorious Word, is speaking to us on all sides. He speaks by the holy Scriptures. He speaks by His Spirit. He speaks by His ministers. He speaksby His ordinances. He speaks by affliction, drawing us to that most loving "brother, born

for adversity." He speaks by His tenderness and gentleness. He speaks by His sufferings and cross. He speaks as our present Intercessor with God. He speaks by His coming majesty. Let us more attentively listen to Him, and in proportion as our hearts are tuned to this heavenly melody, shall we be able to add our accompaniment of praise, not with our lips alone, but also with the harmony of true Christian lives. Nor need we (as Scripture tells us) ascend into heaven, or descend into the deep, or do any wonderful, difficult, eccentric acts, before we can hear Christ, and receive Him for ourselves, as the Word, with all the privileges centered and summed up in Him. If the Spirit be our teacher, we may hear and receive Him at any time, at any age, under any circumstances. For He is very nigh to us, just and expressly for our reception: and what saith the Scripture. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thine heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved[q]."

[q] Rom. x. 8, 9.

SERMON II.

HUMILIATION OF CHRIST, IN HIS INCARNATION, NATIVITY AND INFANCY.

ISAIAH IX. 6.

Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given.

PERFECT harmony prevails throughout all the Bible as an whole, and in all parts of it one towards another. It speaks to us in one definite form. It declares certain truths by one grand systematic plan, carried on throughout its whole contents from the beginning of the Book of Genesis to the very end of the Book of Revelation. And if, again, we look at the Bible in any separate part, that distinct portion, though perhaps comparatively small, and taken either from history, or prophecy, or psalm, or gospel, or epistle, or any other part of Scripture, will certainly present just the same doctrine by which the whole Bible is characterized. We may often be unable to reconcile altogether this or that difficulty: but that makes no real difference in the case. No discrepancy can or will ever really exist. Each passage will prove, in itself, its holy origin. Each portion will shine with brightness

like the whole, and shew by its formation (if I may so speak) whence and how it came to be there: i. e. by the one Spirit, teaching and enlightening with full inspiration all who have written God's holy Word.

It may also be observed how this divine and perfect consistency prevails in every subject, taken by itself, of which the Scripture treats, though that subject may occupy whole books, written by many and by divers pens. Take, for instance, the whole Jewish history, of which, more or less, it treats throughout, from the twelfth chapter of the Book of Genesis: i. e. from the call of Abraham. All is in unity. The whole history is that of God's choosing one people, preparing one people, preserving one people, sparing one people, separating one people and causing it to "dwell alone," even as it does now, and announcing that one people as to be distinguished in future times with such honour and such dignity among the inhabitants of earth, that all its former renown shall have been only the mere symbol or type of its future glory. Or again — take any separate and detached passage, treating of the Jews, and you will find it summing up in brief, and, as it were, painting in miniature, just the same doctrines, facts, and realities. Like a crystal fragment in the mass, and that same fragment, if broken up into many pieces, all unitedly and each separately will be true to one grand formation from God's creating hand.

And now to apply these considerations to the

life and history of Christ, with a special reference, first, to His incarnation and nativity; and then, secondly, to the days of His early infancy.

At His first appearing, Jesus Christ "came to visit us in His great humility;" and, though "equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead[a]," He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross[b]." Such is the history of our Redeemer, as a suffering Lord, from His own first will that it should be so in heaven, to the consummation of that will, in act and deed, on this earth. And now we may proceed to apply that principle, on which I have already dwelt a little in detail, to one particular part of our Saviour's history—I mean its early part—I mean His incarnation, His nativity, and His infantine days. And first to His incarnation, or being made flesh.

A virgin in humble life, named Mary, dwelt in a "city of Galilee named Nazareth," and was soon to be wedded to one engaged in the trade of a carpenter, and equally unknown beyond his own neighbourhood. The name of that man was Joseph. Not to some lofty one, illustrious in man's eye, not to one of wealth or of splendid station in society, but to this Mary, high in lineage no doubt, but low in her present state, came the angel Gabriel. He was sent by God.

[a] Athanasian Creed. [b] Phil. ii. 7, 8.

He said to her, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women[c]." At first this saying troubled her, so little did she know or anticipate God's sovereign and most gracious will, in choosing her for such an high dignity. And when the "Holy Ghost had come upon her;" and when the "power of the highest had overshadowed her;" and when that "holy thing[d]," even the Son of God, was conceived in her womb, she came not forth into notice and publicity, but went into the hill country, where at this time, her cousin Elizabeth was dwelling in retirement[e]; and there she abode with her, sharing her retirement too for the space of three months[f], at the expiration of which time she returned to her own house.

Such was the obscurity attending the incarnation. Thus was it hidden from the sight of man—"without observation"—as ever hitherto concerning the kingdom of God.

But look also on this incarnation of the Son of God in another light! We have noticed its obscurity. Now let us observe the dishonour and shame attending it in man's eye. For as this dishonour and this shame was ever a part in our Saviour's humiliation, as judged by man, so was it even before His birth. So was it at the incarnation of the Son of God.

Thus far we have taken our narrative of that great event from St. Luke's Gospel. Now let us

[c] Luke i. 28. [d] Luke i. 35. [e] Luke i. 40. [f] Luke i. 56.

turn to the first chapter of St. Matthew! That evangelist thus takes up the history—"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily[g]." Such was the dishonour to the mere natural eye—the humiliation in man's unaided view — the scandal or offence attending our Redeemer and redemption by Him at the very beginning. And it needed a message from God to correct the error of man, just as it needs still nothing less than a message from the Spirit of the most high God to take away the offence from the heart of any man, as to Jesus Christ and all His redeeming work. But to proceed—"While he (that is Joseph) thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins[h]." And thus, we trace the divine harmony and full consistency of Christ's incarnation, with His whole person, work, life, and suffering on earth, at His first coming in great humility.

[g] Matt. i. 18, 19.

[h] Matt. i. 20, 21.

Let us now proceed to regard His nativity or birth from the same point of view!

A few months pass away. The world's history goes on as before. From the seat of empire, under which Judæa was a subject land—from Rome and its emperor goes a decree forth, that all under the Romans should be taxed, after a certain manner not before practised[i]. Which, of course, was under the providence and appointment of God to fulfil His own will, as revealed in prophecy, concerning the place and mode of our Saviour's birth. We read that "all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child." Here again is humiliation! absolute submission to the law of man—obedience to an earthly king rendered by Him through whom kings rule, even the Lord of lords, and King of kings[k]." The birth too at an inn—in the place of strangers, and not even in His parent's home—nay, still more, even in the stable of that inn, because for Jesus and his parents there was no room in the house of reception itself—the visit of the angel not to the mighty and wealthy of the land,

[i] Luke ii. 2.

[k] Early in the life of Jesus, the fulfilled prophecy, as the "Servant of rulers." Isaiah xlix. 7.

but to a few poor shepherds "abiding in the field, and keeping watch over their flock by night"—all this was the type and true similitude of all our Saviour's life. He came to this world, not as the place of His rest, but as the Stranger, the Visitor from heaven—Immanuel, God with us—just passing through it, dwelling for a short time in the tabernacle or tent of His body[l], having "no place (as He Himself declared) where to lay His head." He came too, at first, only announced to a few obscure followers, taken from the humblest rank, and forming at His death, so far as we know, only a little and believing company of about one hundred and twenty souls. Now in all this what perfect harmony! We only have to trace it out—only just to exercise our observation on it—only to admire and adore. "Known unto God are all His acts from the beginning of the world[m]." He is one and the same for ever; and however mighty His purpose may be, however mysterious His plan, however grand and infinite redemption, as an whole, was and is, the very birth of Jesus in all its attending circumstances, plainly preaches and proclaims its full and true character. It is told by the family coming up to Bethlehem. It is told by the inn. It is told by the stable. It is told by the angel's visit to the humble shepherds, watching their flock by night, and chosen as the first of all to hear the glorious news: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good

[l] ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν. [m] Acts xv. 18.

tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord[n]."

The same train of thought may accompany us too, as we, thirdly, regard our Saviour's first days upon earth, and His early infancy. He was to be, throughout, a persecuted Saviour—and, again, His first appearance on earth was not to introduce a reign of peace or freedom from all trouble, contest and disquietude. No, on the contrary. When Simeon blessed that holy infant lying in his arms, he prophetically spake: "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which should be spoken against[o]." And the sword of sorrow was to pierce even His mother's heart. He subsequently said Himself: "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth. I came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword"—peace certainly to the believer's heart and inward spirit—but the effect of Christ's coming would be division, and contention, and strife, even as light is opposed to darkness, and one must yield to the other. Nor do they speak falsely by any means, who say, that Christianity has been the cause of very many wars, contentions, and disturbances. And it is for this reason—because God has ordered the kingdom of His Son to be received by men, but the world at large will not receive it. So it has always been. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received

[n] Luke ii. 10, 11. [o] Luke ii. 34.

Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name[p]." Here, we may see, are two distinct classes in the world; and those who do receive Christ and His kingdom have been very commonly hated and opposed, and attacked, and sometimes rooted out from the land of their habitation by the enemies of Christ and His true Gospel. So it was in many realms which Mahomet overran with his fanatical hosts, and which never yet have recovered the true faith of Christ. And so it has been, at various times, even in our own land, and in France, and I may safely say, with more or less of a marked character, in all other European climes—a subject of which history is full.

But we must retrace our steps, and see how all this was typified and represented by the very life and history of Jesus in His infantine days. Nothing can possibly be more familiar to all Christian ears than the narrative of these events. But to apply them is another thing—another high privilege. And it is for this that I now recall them—that I now dwell upon them. When Jesus is born, humble and obscure as His nativity was, does it pass by in all tranquillity, as, naturally, might have been expected? No! Just the contrary! There is trouble in royal palaces—trouble in the great metropolis of Judæa. "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him[q]." Im-

[p] John i. 11, 12. [q] Matt. ii. 3.

mediately persecution begins. Jesus Himself is the object of it. The seed of the serpent persecutes the seed of th ewoman, or Jesus, the man-child, and seeks His destruction. Herod lies, and designs His death[r]." "Go and search diligently," (said he to the "wise men from the east") "and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also." But God intervened. God led them and warned them. They saw—they worshipped the child, but they came to Herod no more. Moreover, God saw to the future preservation of the child's life. "Arise, (said the "angel of the Lord" to Joseph in a dream,) arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt." Joseph obeyed. He "took the young child and His mother by night[s] and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod." Thus early the persecution of Jesus began. And when, do we ask, did it end? Never during His life—never till He was expiring on the cross—never till He died, praying for His murderers: "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do!"

But the persecution of Jesus Himself was not the only thing represented by this history of His early days. Another strange and terrible event belonged to those days—commonly called "the murder of the innocents." We learn concerning

[r] Matt. ii. 8.

[s] Humiliation still! The journey was not in the light and glory of the day—not in the pomp and splendour of attendance and the world's gaze, but unseen, unknown,—"by night."

Herod, that "when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, he was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem[s]," thinking thus to ensure the Saviour's death, hesitating not at any act of wickedness—no, not even one so foul and unnatural. "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not[t]." It is utterly beyond man's tongue to tell adequately of such tribulation as this: and no one but a parent, in the rare instance of losing a child by some most terrific and unnatural way, could realize it in the least degree. But thus it was proclaimed for ever, in prophetic act and deed, that not only Jesus, but His seed too, those born of the Spirit, the true children of God, who could not possibly have done any kind of harm, naturally subjecting them to man's animosity and wrath, should thus suffer for the sake of Jesus and for the kingdom of God. And every martyrdom which has since taken place, every one who has borne persecution—and specially those who have borne it unto death, from Stephen's day to our own—every such one, in all ages of the church, and in all lands, was represented at the massacre of Bethlehem: and they who are accounted worthy of the kingdom of Christ will be content to suffer tribulation, and will not mistake

[s] Matt. ii. 16. [t] Matt. ii. 17, 18.

the nature of His service here, and will, if faithful and true, take up their cross, and bear it even unto death: and, having "washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb," will lay down their lives rather than deny Him, as multitudes have done before them, sustained, when the need and hour of trial came, by the grace and the power and the Spirit of God. Here again too, in Herod's disquietude—in the trouble of the city of Jerusalem —in the attempt to murder the Lord of glory in His first infantine days—and in the destruction of the dear children at Bethlehem, it is well to trace, as we may most clearly, all Jesus Christ's subsequent history announced, and all that persecution told and foreshadowed which, at divers times, and in divers places, and in divers ways, the church of Christ or the true children of God have had to encounter with pangs, death, and martyrdom, as their passage to joy, to life, and glory.

I trust, in conclusion, that we have all carefully pursued that special line of attention and due thought concerning our Lord's incarnation, birth, and early days, which I have endeavoured, without deviation, to trace out. Were we to follow the subject no further, it would, I think, be most profitable—for what, I ask, can be more profitable, in the Spirit's hand and application—than a fit understanding of those truths conveyed in any part of our Saviour's history? But I will make just one specific and practical use of our present subject. It is, that we, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, should take diligent

heed rightly to apprehend our own true and personal position in regard to Jesus our Lord and His present kingdom. We have, I trust, learned something now concerning His person and work, in the day of His humiliation, proclaimed and taught by those very events, on which we have just dwelt, as facts in the Gospel history. May we not learn and apply, from all this, what that conformity to Jesus is which is expected from us here below? May we not learn, that, if we are partakers of Christ and of His present kingdom on earth, we too shall humble ourselves to the very uttermost, taking, as it were, in spirit within, and in outward life, as its demonstration, the very "lowest room?" We see Jesus born of poor and obscure parentage; and we must hereby learn implicit content with the humblest lot, yea, more—learn to feel its honour and its dignity, if rightly received and rightly occupied by us, in the sight of our God. Again, we see even the very mother of our Lord bearing, for a while, dishonour in her husband's sight, just on account of that mighty honour which God had granted her. So we too may bear for a while dishonour in man's sight, if that honour is upon us "which cometh from God only." We see the parents of our blessed Lord obedient unto man's decree. So we may learn obedience unto all rule which it is fitting for us to submit to. We see the birth of Jesus in the stable of an inn. We too may learn to live in the spirit "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," occupying it just as we would an

inn—not regarding it as our real home. We see that there was no room for Him in that inn itself, in the usual place for the entertainment of men. We must not wonder, should there be no room for us in the heart of the world, but rather let us reject all such expectation, and see that it would not be in any true keeping or conformity with our fit position, as the followers of Christ, "whom the nation abhorred, and whom man despised[u]." We see that Jesus was announced first to the poor shepherds keeping their watch by night, and not to the mighty or nobles of the earth; and hence we too may learn that the grandeur of this present world is just nothing in the sight of God—that He hath chosen the weak and the poor, the unknown and the unseen, as the objects of His love, grace, and visitation—and so we too, in the humblest sphere, may rest content, satisfied, at peace, not seeking any "great things" for ourselves, but delighting ourselves in the favour of God, and in Christ Jesus as our "portion for ever," and in the glad news of salvation, daily renewed by the Holy Spirit in our ears and hearts. And lastly, as we see how Jesus was no sooner born than subjected immediately to fierce persecution, we too may learn that His true disciples are not exempt from similar attacks of theirs and their Saviour's foes. We must be thankful, when exempt from them, in the mercy and indulgence of our God. And when we meet them, we must not count them by any

[u] Isaiah xlix. 7.

means a strange thing. Nor must we be incredulous as to the designs, malice, and subtlety of Christ's opponents, but be awake to them, and pray for those who suffer under them, and ever be ready to sympathize with them, and to seek for true wisdom, courage, and fidelity to advocate the cause of Jesus and His people in every way. Should we, by the Spirit, learn lessons like these, then, among many other benefits, we shall be kept from mistakes and misapprehensions concerning our calling, as Christians now, such as those which Paul condemns, when, with holy irony, he saith to the Corinthians[x], "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us." And our attention to the subject of this day will be no barren or unfruitful thing, but it will influence our spirit and our conduct in many ways. It will be full of practical results, all tending to the glory of our Saviour, all manifesting that we rightly know Him, and our position as followers of Him in His low estate. And the recognition of these grand truths, on Christ's humiliation, will not only tend to keep us in conformity with Him at this present time of our humiliation too, but will also be a pathway for us to conformity with Him at the day of His coming, when our cross shall be changed for a crown; and our fellowship with Jesus, in his suffering and low estate, for an eternal fellowship with Him in His future glory.

[x] 1 Cor. iii. 8.

SERMON III.

THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS TO JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS.

MATT. IV. 11.

Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.

IN the three accounts of our Saviour's temptation, given by St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, it is told us that this wonderful event in His history took place immediately after his baptism, and just before he entered on His public ministry. The voice from heaven had been heard; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" and now Jesus was to be tested and tried, and proved to the uttermost: He "was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil."

There are two kinds of temptation — one, that trial to which God Himself puts His servants, as He did Abraham, with a view to their increased benefit and glory — another, that which Satan the tempter employs, with a view to man's injury, or to interfere with and stop any holy work. Thus he tempted our first pa-

rents, and succeeded. Thus he tempted Jesus, our great second Head and Representative, and was defeated. I shall not enter now into the particulars of this temptation in the wilderness. It would afford material for many sermons; and any detailed review of that subject would preclude me from fulfilling that special design for which I have chosen the text. That is, first, to display Satan and his temptations, exchanged for angels and their ministration, in regard to Jesus Christ Himself.

Secondly, to follow out the very same subject in regard to the members of Christ's body, no doubt often tempted by the same enemy, and with no less doubt visited, according to their need, with all support and strength from above —including help from angels, of whom the Spirit hath said; "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation[a]?"

"Then the devil leaveth him"—or, as written in St. Luke, "when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season[b]." Who can tell how great this relief—how blessed and happy this exchange? For forty days Jesus had been alone—or only with the "wild beasts" (as St. Mark tells[c]) for his companions. What came on Him then? "He hungered"—suffered no doubt much bodily pain—much bodily infirmity, such as hunger, when unsatisfied, inflicts. Satan then presents three distinct kinds

[a] Heb. i. 14. [b] Matt. iv. 13. [c] Mark i. 13.

of temptation—taken, to use the words of St. John's Epistle, from "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life[d]"—but all in vain. We, however, must not suppose that this temptation was unaccompanied with much suffering to Christ—(I mean, in a moral point of view, I mean to His spirit)—because he was victorious. Victory is often attended with much suffering. Bunyan illustrates this very rightly when he makes Christian suffer much in his contest with Apollyon, although victorious. The very presence of the great living head and originator of all sin and wickedness on earth was, in itself, intense suffering to Christ. The dishonour to God the Father, which was aimed at by the devil—that again, even as proposed to "His dear Son," was a most hateful and most painful thing. The spiritual contest, though perfectly sinless on the part of Jesus, and sure to end in victory over Satan, was, no doubt, attended with all kind of distress to Him. This is quite distinct from any inclination to yield—or any possibility of yielding, or liability to yield. That was not in Jesus. Of that he was clearly free. And just in proportion to His moral purity, to His spiritual excellency, to His perfection in every way, would be the intensity of pain which would ensue to Him from the tempter's presence and wickedness. All which we may, in a measure, apprehend by the remembrance, that as any man is holy, just so much does sin grieve him when he is brought in

[d] 1 John ii. 16.

contact with it. If so, how infinitely would sin and the very wicked One himself grieve and distress Him, who was infinitely holy and good, and yet, in our nature, was subject to all suffering, whether of body without or of the spirit within.

"But now the devil," being foiled, "leaveth Him." Blessed deliverance this! "And, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." Blessed exchange of living personages this! Angels bore a constant and distinguished part in attending and glorifying Jesus on the earth. An angel announced his forerunner, St. John. Gabriel the angel announced His birth to the Virgin Mary. "The angel of the Lord" appeared by night to the shepherds with the tidings of that actual birth, and there "was with him a multitude of the heavenly host." Our Saviour's own word to Nathanael was; "Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man[e]." At the agony in the garden "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him[f]." The angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door of His tomb[g]." Angels guarded the place where his body had been laid. And, finally, when He ascended into heaven, angels announced His return in glory to the earth[h]. We need not inquire what was the nature of that ministry which the angels fulfilled for Jesus in the wilderness. An able commen-

[e] John i. 51. [f] Luke xxii. 43. [g] Matt. xxvii. 2.
[h] Acts i. 11.

tator writes on the subject, "The good angels came and ministered unto Him, whether by bringing Him food .... or otherwise executing His commands, is not expressed, and it is too much curiosity to inquire." Scripture usually veils such matters. They do not practically bear upon us as to their mode of operation. Enough for us to know their good results! But what a blessed exchange of society! Just think of it! Devils depart! Angels arrive! They minister to Jesus according to His need and will. And from this angelic visitation and ministry we may learn fresh lessons and convictions on the strength of our Saviour's temptation. For as He came to this world for humiliation in all things, and as humiliation was the rule and the character of His whole sojourn on earth, we may be sure that the angels came not without need, and that the presence of His own servants from heaven tells of all which He willingly endured, on our account, at the hands of our enemy, the prince of the powers of hell.

We are told in the Scripture, that as Jesus was, "so also are we in this world." This is true in the matter of temptation. Many differences there certainly are between our temptations and His. He was sinless. We are sinful. He never fell under any of them. We have all fallen under them. He drank deep of that cup of bitterness which temptation brings. We only. in comparison, taste a few drops of it. Nevertheless, all the true children of God are, more or

less, tempted by the enemy of souls. Temptation is no strange thing. It is common to us all. We may not be led up into some lone wilderness, nor have we just the same offers, appeals, and persuasions addressed to us which were, as we read, presented to the Saviour in the hour of His hunger and solitude. Satan, however, is too active, too malicious, too desirous of destroying every saint of God, to leave any one without attack or without snares laid for him. David knew them, when Satan moved him to number the people[i]. Peter knew them, when tempted to ask his Lord and Master that He would shun the scandal of the cross[k]. Paul knew them, when the messenger of Satan buffeted him[l]. These are special and well known instances, many more of which might be quoted from the Word of God. But this is needless. For every true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ knows that he has to expect, encounter, and defeat the cunning and the violence of his great spiritual adversary. Times too and seasons there are when Satan is permitted to afflict the children of God with more than usual strength. Times there are when the soul feels peculiarly disquieted and peculiarly depressed—overwhelmed and tossed about, as it were, far more than commonly, in the long campaign of the Christian warfare—when a living power seems specially against us, keeping or driving out all good and holy thoughts, and suggesting all imaginations just of a contrary kind.

[i] 1 Chron. xxi. 1. [k] Matt. xvi. 22. [l] 2 Cor. xii. 7.

I used the word seems—but a reality is here. At such times the living powers of darkness are really and truly at work with all their energy. They are no semblances. They are no fictions. They are no mere imaginations. They are no mere names. I certainly think that now and then we meet with a true servant of God too much possessed and engrossed with the thought of Satan's temptations, as specially assaulting him more than others. And his peace is constantly disturbed; and he is checked in the happy discharge of his daily duties; and there seems a want of due balance in him, both as to his inward and as to his outward life, all arising from the same cause. But far more common, and most certainly, in the sight of God, far more deplorable is their state, who know nothing, think nothing of their spiritual foe, and never encounter him at all. In them, as Jesus expresses it, Satan has "his goods in peace." The Stronger One, Jesus, must personally visit us, by His Spirit, must summon and wake us up from our peace with the enemy, prepare us for the strife with foes much worse than those of "flesh and blood[m]," and give us the will, desire, and ability to combat and to resist, before we can know what Satan's temptation is, and what it is for him to leave one. The subject is mysterious, but it is one of reality, truth, and fact. To this declaration many a response will rise from the experience of believing hearts. They know

[m] See Ephes. vi. 12.

something of such darker and more arduous passages in their spiritual course. Nor on the deathbed are such visitations rare. Nor in any seasons of special weakness, weariness, or distress. For Satan well knows his advantages. As he beset Jesus, hungry in the wilderness, so too he chooses his time to attack the children of God. But all in vain. He can only attack. He cannot conquer them. He cannot make them his prey. He must leave them at the appointed time. For their Saviour and Almighty Friend is stronger than their enemy: and He will appear for them just at the right time; for God knoweth how to deliver them: and He will deliver them: and not one of them ever yet was vanquished by Satan, so as to lose his soul. Nay more! Not one of them yet lost the reward for his full and final victory over the great adversary.

Nor, again, should we doubt that when Satan leaves the true children of God, then angels come and minister unto them. Carelessly indeed must any amongst us have read the pages of God's Word, if he does not see that the ministry of angels is constantly employed for man, and specially in behalf of Christ's true church. Jesus shews us this, when he tells of Lazarus borne by angels to Abraham's bosom—of the angels of children ever looking at their heavenly Father's face, and in many other instances. This again is a subject of deep mystery: for, as yet, we cannot see these angelic creatures, our gracious helpers on our pilgrimage—our friends and invisible companions. That is, we do not see them

with our bodily eyes. We have to see them and prize them through faith. But as God's Word is full of their ministry to His saints of old time, so we have every reason to believe that their good offices are not less exercised in behalf of the Lord's people now. Why should we doubt it? Our God is the same still in love towards us. Still it pleaseth Him to employ means, whereby this love should continually reach us for our protection and benefit in all things. Why should we doubt it? "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth[p]." Therefore errands of God's mercy, love, and providential care for us, the redeemed of Adam's race, will and must be to them errands of exceeding joy. Again I ask, Why should we doubt it? We are weak and helpless as the saints of old time. We need no less mighty powers from above to strengthen us, though unseen by mortal eye, and but feebly recognised, even when we do, by faith, grasp the reality of their presence and their ministrations. If evil angels and evil spirits abound in the precincts of our earthly dwelling-place, why should we doubt of our being surrounded with the good spirits too? When God opened Elisha's servant's eyes, then, and not till then, he saw the air around him full of guardian spirits[q]. As yet we know not our full obligations to such guardians. And it is well that we should not, in our weakness, know it. For the creature and the instrument, living

[p] Luke xv. 10. [q] 2 Kings vi. 17.

though that instrument be, and good, and blessed, must not intercept our worship, thanksgiving, and praise, as directed up to the great Creator and to the great original Giver of all things. Some have been thus tempted and have fallen under the temptation. Witness the church of Rome, in its perversity and in its disobedience to the plain command of God, just doing that which the Bible forbids to be done, "in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he (or a man) hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind[r]."

And when, in conclusion, when is there any time, in the experience and life of a true disciple of Christ, more likely to receive angelic ministration than the time succeeding to temptation under the power of the great adversary. Fallen angels are they—fallen from that high estate, which, in their pride, they would not keep—yea, even so utterly fallen as to desire the fall of others too—the fall of the whole human race into complete and universal ruin. Thanks be to Jesus, their desire is baffled! Thanks be to Him that our song of deliverance may be: "The snare is broken and we are escaped![s]" But who so fitting, as good angels are, to minister unto those whom the evil angels assail? How they will delight in the undertaking! How joyfully they will perform it! How zealously will they fulfil their missions and embassies of love! On spiritual agencies like these it is not for me to enlarge:

[r] Col. i. 18. [s] Psalm cxxiv. 7.

because here we enter at once an overshadowing cloud. It is, however, a bright cloud, like that on the mount. Our gaze is bounded. Our steps here must not be presumptuous. It is "holy ground." Our calling is not, on the one hand, to neglect or pass over these things, nor, on the other, to speak too strictly or too dogmatically. And we must wait for full revelation on such subjects, while we should earnestly grasp and make our own all which is revealed already on them. And this at least we may safely and securely hold—namely, that if Satan and his evil spirits can affect our body, our mind, and our feelings, in sundry and injurious and afflictive ways—(as, I should suppose, none of us will doubt or gainsay,) if they can do this, as permitted so to act against us, and can thus try us, so that they may prove that our armour is of God, then too, and with equal certainty, at least, the good and unfallen spirits, who dwell in the presence of God, and serve for His messengers, will and must be able to act for us, as commissioned by God, and to aid us in body, mind, and feelings too. Therefore, if we have known and experienced what it is to be tempted at all by the evil One, and what it is to be freed from the pains of Satanic attack, and to rejoice again in the light and glory of God's countenance—if we have known what it is to come out of darkness into light, out of oppression into glad liberty of spirit, then, indeed, we must thankfully and most gladly join in praising our God for having

revealed to us that good angels are for us, though evil angels are against us—and may we not rejoice in the expectation, that, at the very moment when the tempter flies from us, angels of light will hasten to us, and bestow upon us their ministrations of love? Verily I hold that all Scripture will fully and clearly support such conclusions and such expectations: for, in temptation, as in all other things, the members of Christ are partakers of His sufferings; and if partakers of His sufferings, they are partakers of His consolations and refreshments too. Nor, because the doctrine has been much misused; and because much superstition has been built upon it, is this any reason for us to shun, skip, or undervalue this or any other doctrine in God's word.. Precious indeed should it be to us that angels are sent from God to God's living and tempted children on earth, and, especially, at those solemn and mysterious times in their spiritual history and life, when it is, in a measure, with them, as it was with Jesus in the wilderness: "The devil leaveth Him; and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." And now let no one imagine for a moment that all this is of little consequence to him! Whatever God has made known is to us of unspeakable consequence: and when He has told us that angels are to us ministering spirits—when the children of God are spoken of as come "unto an innumerable company of angels[8]"—and when it is written

[8] Hebrews xii. 22.

that the "angels desire to look into[t]" the things concerning redemption, as manifested on the earth—when the conversion of one sinner here causes joy among them—when all this, and much more, of a similar kind, is written for us in the Word of God, let not, oh! let not such information be to us a "barren or unfruitful" thing, but, on the contrary, let it awaken fresh praise and gratitude to God, who has provided such guardians for us here, and such company for us hereafter, and all through the Son of man. May the Holy Spirit mightily increase our faith in apprehending these truths, and give us grace to employ them and enjoy them: for they are among the things which are revealed, and which belong to us and our children for ever. Is it not a privilege to hear of them? I am sure that I feel it a privilege to speak of them. I feel my message now to be indeed one of glad tidings. May our hearts be enlarged to receive them! May we be refreshed by them: and may Jesus Himself be unto us like the ladder which Jacob saw "set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it[u]!"

[t] 1 Peter i. 12. [u] Genesis xxviii. 12.

SERMON IV.

THE FEVER CURED.

LUKE IV. 38, 39.

And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought Him for her. And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her; and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

WE find the evangelists, in their history of our Lord's life and actions, constantly describing the immense variety of sicknesses and sufferings, which He was accustomed to heal as He went on His way of mercy, compassion, and love. We may, for instance, refer to the end of the fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and the twenty-third verse. "Jesus went about all Galilee .... healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people .... And they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy: and He healed them." So, again, in the fortieth verse of

the chapter now before us: "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them." We may conclude that these mighty works were done by our Saviour, partly, no doubt, to mitigate human woe—partly as types of that entire emancipation from suffering and disease which He will accomplish for our bodies hereafter, not less than for our souls; and partly as proving His divine mission to a world very slow, dull, and slack, in appreciating works of a spiritual kind, done for the souls of men. But, perhaps, these manifold and exceedingly abundant cures have no greater glory than when viewed in the following light—I mean as representing the willingness and ability of Jesus to cure all manner of sin and iniquity, and His office, as the Physician, who could be baffled by no sort or species whatsoever, in all the catalogue of human transgression and guilt. I would even, for myself, read such passages in this cheering light: and therefore I select the text in hope of communicating, by God's help, some of that true and heartfelt satisfaction, which they are indeed so adapted to bring. May the Holy Spirit guide us, as we now review this cure and restoration!

On the day when Jesus performed this miracle He had been teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. There He had publicly healed "one who had a spirit of an unclean devil." All the beholders "were amazed, and spake among them-

selves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about. And He arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house[a]." Here too sorrow and affliction met Him; or, rather I should say, hither in all probability the blessed Saviour went, because He knew that sorrow and affliction were there. Such knowledge led His steps to the Pool of Bethesda, that He might heal the sufferer of thirty-eight long years[b]. Such knowledge led Him over the waters of the Lake, that He might visit the region of the Gadarenes, and heal that wretched man, whose dwelling was among the tombs, and whom the Legion of devils possessed, but whom Jesus healed, and sent home to his friends, clothed, and in his right mind, to tell them how great things the Lord had done for him, and had had compassion on him[c]. Such knowledge led Him to the two mourning sisters of Bethany, that He might raise their brother from the dead, and restore him to their love once more — I say that sorrow and affliction were in Simon's abode, when Jesus entered there. "Simon's wife's mother was taken with a very great fever."

Some of us may personally know, from the experience of our own bodies, what a "great fever" is. I have never experienced it myself, but, in my duties of pastoral visitation, I have

[a] Luke iv. 31–38. [b] John v. 1–9. [c] Mark v. 1–13.

seen many, many instances of this most prostrating disease. And I have witnessed its power in a near relative—one very strong in bodily frame and intellectual gifts, but brought so low that one single sentence—yes, the repetition of the very shortest text was as much as he could bear. But, perhaps, we all know more or less the nature of such an attack, as a "great fever." The whole body shares in the consequent distress. I describe it from the language of one, speaking of it in a medical light. "The restlessness is incessant: the face is pallid: the features are shrunk: the expression of the countenance is most peculiar, being strikingly indicative of weakness and of suffering. In a word, the whole series of bodily organs is deranged, and the mind shares and sympathizes most acutely with them. Wandering thoughts take the place of intelligence, and for a season the powers of the mind are utterly prostrated. Oftentimes death ensues, and the utmost skill of the physician proves all in vain to provide effectual relief." Such was the afflicting and perilous ailment under Simon's roof. Such were the circumstances of the family, when Jesus, the great Healer and Physician, the Conqueror of sickness and Lord of health and life, entered their favoured home. "Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever."

"And they besought Him for her." Here we see intercessory prayer. The Lord expects that we should pray earnestly for one another—that we should present to Him the case of those dear

to us, that we should look to Him for their deliverance and comfort in all times of sorrow, and for the continuance of their safety and prosperity, when all is well with them. "None of us"—i. e. true children of God—"none of us liveth to himself." We are members one of another—so set in the Christlan body, that we should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it[d]." And the command is specially given in St. James: "Pray one for another, that ye may be healed." And often do we find Jesus granting a blessing and a boon to one, because others sought it. So, in the case of the palsied man, whom his friends brought, it is written that Jesus "seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee[e]." Again, it was the prayer of the Syrophenician woman that obtained her daughter's cure[f], the faith of the Centurion, whereby his servant lived[g], the desire of parents and friends for Christ's touch and blessing on the little children, which brought them to His arms and called forth the blessing from His gracious lips[h]. So here too, in the passage before us, one stricken with sickness was lying in the house, whither Jesus came, "and they besought Him for her."

Nor did they plead in vain. "He stood over

[d] 1 Cor. xiii. 26. [e] Matt. ix. 2. [f] Matt. xv. 28.
[g] Matt. viii. 5. [h] Mark x. 13.

her and rebuked the fever: and it left her." How simple, yet how mighty the narrative! Here is the Lord Jesus Christ acting as one in whom were centered all the powers of earth and all the powers of heaven. We know that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made[i]." We know (continuing to use the language of Scripture) that "by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist[k]." We know that as a commander would speak to a soldier, and he would obey the command, so sickness and disease would obey Christ. These are the plain testimonies of God's Word. Therefore we also know, that, as He "worketh hitherto," according to His own Word—as His delight is in the "habitable earth" and among the "sons of men[l]," so to Him, as the living instrument in the Father's hand, we owe every boon and every blessing which we enjoy. It is through Him and through redemption by Him, that we have all those faculties, in which the love and wisdom and benevolence of God so brightly shine. It is through Him that the childhood has its sprightliness, its youth its vigour, mature age its powers for intellectual work and activity, old age its calm serenity and repose. No tongue can yet tell

[i] John i. [k] Col. i. 16, 17. [l] Prov. viii.

how much we owe to Jesus our Saviour, even in this present life, for exemption from evil and for enjoyment of good. And not only so: but while all good directly comes to us through the will, power, and instrumentality of Christ, the Son of God, so too, though no evil comes to believers through Him, yet all evil is subject to Him, and under His command. Therefore it was that devils fled at His word. Therefore death relaxed its stern grasp, when He bade the dead rise. Therefore sickness, at His bidding, was a thing of nought. We are not to suppose that all sickness and all pain, though evil things in themselves and all the result of sin, are evil things to the Christian sufferer himself. Think not this for one single instant! No, very often they are full of blessing—rich means of grace—means of introduction to speedy and eternal joy. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory[m]." But whenever it is good for His people to be healed of their sicknesses, then Jesus is quite sure to heal them. Whenever it is good for them to escape death, then they are quite sure to be preserved from it. Not all the powers of the universe can then destroy them. The air cannot with its flying pestilence. The water cannot with all its floods and waves. The earth cannot with all its perils. The fire cannot with all its flames. "The Lord reigneth" over all—even Jesus their Lord and their God—and

[m] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

reigneth over all for them. All these truths are contained and expressed in every miracle of Christ. All these are declared, as our privileges, if we belong to Him, whenever we behold Him removing sickness and pain — when, for instance, "He rebuked the fever," and it left the sufferer.

One part of the narrative only remains now. "And immediately she arose and ministered unto them." Instantaneous and complete were all the cures effected by our Lord—and thus like the acts of God. He speaks, and it is done. One moment of time joins, in His hands, the end to the beginning. The cripple of thirty-eight years rises, in an instant, at the Saviour's word, and takes up his bed and walks. The woman with the issue of blood for twelve suffering years touches Jesus, and immediately is cured of her plague. The demoniac, restored, longs and petitions to go about with Jesus and to do His work. So too here. Peter's wife's mother arises at once and ministers to Christ and to those with Him. The fever is all gone. The body is at ease. The mind is in vigour, and she at once consecrates body and mind to her great Deliverer by active service. Let us learn for ourselves a spiritual lesson here! Let us who are spiritually healed go and do likewise, serving the Lord and serving His people in all gratitude and love, and doing His work as the grand business and delight of life, till He Himself comes and takes us from service here to His service in glory!

Yes, it is full time that I should pass from the

letter of this history, and apply it in that manner which it most evidently claims. Were I speaking of a dead body, raised again to life, or of a possessed one emancipated from the devil, or of a palsied one once more going forth in all vigour and strength, I should, of course, make a fitting application drawn from each separate case. I should dwell, in the one instance, on Jesus as giving life to His people out of spiritual death—in the next, as delivering our souls from the bondage of the devil—in the last, as putting spiritual strength in that person who was before all helpless and motionless for a journey heavenward. But, in the instance before us, the line marked out for our thoughts is quite different: "Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever." Let me then remind you of that feverish condition in which the world lies! Truly a "great fever" prevails in the heart of man. What excitement is manifest on all sides about the trivial things of ordinary human life! Hear the inspired Preacher, as he speaks on this matter! "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing[n]." So it was then. So it is still—perhaps at the present day more so than ever. But with that we have little to do; for man's nature is the same at all times and in all places. From youth to age there is a fever raging in multitudes, which nothing but religion can calm down—nothing but the Gospel allay or cure

[n] Eccles. i. 8.

effectually. How restless is youth! How excitable, eager, and anxious to have this or that gratification! How eager is mature age about business, advancement, wealth, or position in life! And even the greyheaded man retains the keenest interest and often shews the most feverish excitement about the mere matters of his very quickly waning existence on this present earth. We hear in the Scripture of some as "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." What a fever is theirs! We hear of those who are living in divers lusts. Is not theirs a fever of the worst kind? We see many whose evil passions all speedily awaken in any strife, political or social, or whatever it may be—many who long and struggle even unto death for fame and renown among men—many who pursue this or that object, having in itself no worth for eternity, with an excitement which nothing appears to diminish or subdue. What a fitful fever in all this! And some make a fever for themselves out of the smallest and most insignificant affairs of their daily and domestic life. But I may go further. I may ask, indeed, whether almost every dwelling in the land has not a fever prevalent within its walls. Spiritually speaking, I believe it is so. Our nature is excitable. It is like tinder, under the sparks of Satan, the world, and the flesh. Or, to keep to our subject, and draw from it our illustrations still, the soul of every man, woman, and child has in it the symptoms and taint of a "great fever," which may be developed at any

moment; and one remedy alone can accomplish a complete and a permanent cure.

That remedy—that living and remedial power—is Christ Jesus the Lord—He, who stood over Simon's wife's mother, and bade the fever depart from her throbbing veins. Rest, peace, quietness of spirit—these are among the best present blessings which our Saviour bestows. I speak not now on that mighty and important subject, viz. peace and rest of spirit with a reconciled God, founded on the joyful sense of sin as forgiven, through Jesus and His blood, His merits and His righteousness. On that subject I do not dwell now, but on that general quietness, satisfaction, and rest which God's people enjoy, as contrasted with the strife, excitement, and disquietude in which so many live from day to day, from year to year, unto the end of their lives. And how many have experienced too the difference which lies between these two respective states of the mind and heart within! How many remember the time when they were eager and impetuous for this or that earthly aim—how they exalted the trifles of each passing hour into things of the utmost magnitude—how they mistook the toys and playthings of this present evil world for things substantially good. In what a fever they then lived! How many can remember the time when their tempers would rise at one displeasing or provoking word—when various evil and forbidden passions would throb and swell at one or another form of temptation! How many can remember a state of constant

want, dissatisfaction, and unrest—a want which nothing could fill up, a state of agitation which the whole world could never have removed, a chronic and feverish series of desire, which, if fulfilled, even to the very uttermost, would only have made way for fresh longings and demands! Multitudes can respond to these feelings and experiences—some earlier cured, and some later in life, but, if cured at all, cured in one and the same way. They were not cured by their own reason or argument. They were not cured by the advance of years. They were not cured by satiety. They were not cured even by experience that all was vanity, But they were cured by the Saviour—by Him who alone could rebuke and still, by His Spirit, the "great fever" of their souls. To no one—until in heaven—to no one, until delivered from the burden of the flesh, can there be any thing like perfect rest and uninterrupted calm. As well we might expect that the ocean should for ever be smooth and unruffled—never have its waters swept by the breeze and the storm. Nevertheless, when Jesus, by His Spirit and in the power of His Word, saith to any soul of man, woman, or child, "Peace, be still"—when He satisfies out of Himself and out of His Gospel the need and desires of any human heart, then the calm within is the more habitual state. Then disturbance becomes the exception; whereas before the disturbance was constant, and the true calm of peacefulness and holiness altogether unknown. Let no one then suppose for

an instant, that, since all mankind are by nature in a feverish and excited state, concerning the things of this present world, therefore this condition must remain to the end of his days—or that he, if in this condition, is only just like others—just like all others, and that all will do very well! Let no one be deluded with such imaginations and false conclusions, as an anodyne or lull to his conscience within! Rather let him know and be well assured that this habitual state is totally inconsistent with any thing like true vital religion, and with the "Spirit of Christ"—that this condition must not continue—that he must be delivered from it, if he would serve God now or hereafter, as He will be served. Feeling thus convinced, let him look to the Saviour, and call on the Saviour, in faith; and entreat Him to do that which He has already done for all His true people, and that which He will do for all and every one of them! And to you, who are now living before God in this favoured and happy state, I would only say, Praise God for it more and more fervently! More and more acknowledge it as the Spirit's gift! Cherish it more and more by all legitimate means! Remember how rich and royal is the boon—how it lifts you up above this world's fears, frets, and disturbances —how it gives you that calm Christian dignity which is above all price—how it enables you to carry on the Lord's work, as being saved yourselves with His full and everlasting salvation, and therefore qualified to win others also to the

enjoyment of the same peace! And follow, I beseech you, on behalf of others, that example set before us to-day in Peter's household! They besought Jesus for the fever-stricken sufferer. So do you beseech Him, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, for all those now fever-stricken as to the things of this present world—your fever-stricken friends, neighbours, and relatives—yes, for all who claim and deserve a share in your intercessions! Ask Him, by His Spirit, to calm and compose all their excitement about sinful things, and about things unworthy of their chief love, as everlasting souls. Ask Him that this fever—this too common fever—may leave them, and return to them no more, and that, instead, true peace may reign in them. And may God give success to your petitions, and grant you to see the objects of your Christian love, Christian prayers, and Christian endeavours, sent forth in peace, restored to themselves, strengthened by Divine grace, and enabled in all things to follow, with you, the way of life and peace, and to minister no more to Satan, the world, and the flesh with all their faculties, but, on the contrary, to minister with them unto Jesus continually, unreservedly, and in that sense of obligation to Him, which will make all service, self-denial, and work in His name, a delight and a privilege beyond tongue to tell, or imagination to conceive! Thus follow her, who, when cured of her fever, immediately arose, and ministered unto Jesus and those with Him!

SERMON V.

THE LOSS OF UNBELIEF.

MARK VI. 5.

And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

REGULARITY, order, and a designed system or plan may be traced out in all the proceedings of our Lord Jesus Christ. He did not, for instance, leave His apostles without assigning to them that especial course, which they were to adopt in carrying forth and extending the Gospel among men. Though He said to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel unto every creature," still it was to be in a prescribed and defined series of work. It was to be "beginning at Jerusalem," then "in Samaria," and then unto the "uttermost ends of the earth." So also in our Lord's own ministry. He began it not in some city or in some locality, for which no reason or account appears, but in His own country, where He had been brought up from childhood. After His baptism and temptation, we find Him at once commencing His ministry. And where?

"Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read[a]." Now we know (from the fourth chapter of St. Luke, whence I quote this part of our Lord's history) that the Nazarenes, instead of rejoicing at the high privilege of having Jesus thus beginning His ministry in His native place, so rejected Him and His preaching, as to draw down on themselves the condemnation: "No prophet is accepted in his own country[b]." And when He proceeded to abase their pride, national and spiritual, "all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong[c]." And His blessed life was preserved, not by any abandonment of their wicked attempt, but by the exercise of His own divine power. He "passed through the midst of them and went His way." Nor did these inhabitants of Nazareth repent, or subsequently shew any better mind towards the Lord of glory. Jesus gave them other opportunities—space and time for repentance—fresh seasons for glorifying Him, if they had chosen so to do. For at a later

[a] Luke iv. 14–17. [b] Luke iv. 24. [c] Luke iv. 28, 29.

period of His ministry (and in this we may compare the end of the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew with the beginning of this chapter of St. Mark, whence the text comes) "He went out from thence" (i. e. from the coast of Tiberias) "and came into His own country; and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands? is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not His sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him." Jesus again repeated His previous rebuke, and brought perhaps to their mind His former charge against them. Again He said unto them, "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them[d]."

I have now briefly referred to the whole Scriptural history or context, leading to this most remarkable passage. May the Holy Spirit guide us, while we, first, consider the difficulty which the concluding declaration involves, and then, secondly, the solemn and important lesson which it contans for us all!

[d] Mark vi. 1–6.

"And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them." All will, I imagine, see and feel the very obvious difficulty which these words present to us. It is, that Jesus, who was Almighty — not less Almighty when living and sojourning on earth, in His fleshly tabernacle, than as God in Heaven—that Jesus, who could raise the dead, and cast out devils, and calm the tumultuous waves by His word of command, and accomplish all miracles physical and spiritual—that Jesus, whom we know to have had always Divine power in Him, should be described as one, who in any place, or under any imaginable circumstances whatsoever, could do no mighty works, save healing a few sick people. There is the difficulty—and, at first sight, it is, no doubt, no ordinary difficulty, though, I trust, we shall soon see how it admits a very clear solution.

We know that impossibilities are of different kinds. It is, for instance, impossible for us to add one cubit to our own stature—to move a mountain by our own natural or bodily strength—to create or give life in the smallest insect of all living tribes. These things are physically impossible. But in this class or range of impossibilities no explanation of our present question is found. Another therefore must be investigated.

The class to which I refer is that of things which are impossible, as viewed in a moral light. It is, for instance, an impossible thing that a just

and upright judge, (if he would maintain such a character, should intentionally condemn an innocent person, or intentionally acquit one who is proved as a transgressor of the law of his country. The judge would feel and declare this as being, simply, an impossible thing—a thing which he could not do—that is, consistently with his office, with his character, with his duty to himself, to his sovereign, to his country, to his God. Here is an impossibility of a moral kind—a thing on which no one can count as able to be done.

So as also is it, when any man of honour and veracity has engaged to fulfil any certain act—has given his promise—has pledged his word to do it. If he lives, and if nothing independent of himself should preclude this deed, it will be held impossible for him to fail of performing it, of acting up to his promise, of fulfilling his word. And though many things might occur to make him wish that his promise had not been made, still that will make no difference in his performance; and provision has been supplied in the Scripture for constraining and sustaining him in this righteous course; for it is written of the "citizen of Zion"—i. e. of the holy and righteous man—as one of his characteristics, that he "sweareth to another and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hinderance." In fact, as he would say, and as he would feel, and as he would exemplify in practice and deed, he cannot do it.

These illustrations, taken from the conduct of

men, will, I think, suffice as a preparation for advancing onward, for examining the right sense, in which it can be said, and in which it is said, that Jesus Himself, He who was the Almighty God, "manifest in the flesh," could not do any thing—that to Him any thing whatever could be impossible.

It was, of course, in a moral sense. He could do nothing inconsistent with Himself, as God. For instance, He could do no wrong—nothing which is not perfectly holy, and perfectly excellent in all ways: and we may lay it to heart and keep it as a record, deeply seated there, that if any thing, in God's ways or doings, appears to us otherwise, that appearance touches not the fact of God's own perfections, but only proves our blindness and incapacity in judging of them. But to proceed with the subject immediately in hand. Concerning the matter of God being unable to do wrong, we find St. Paul drawing a conclusion from this fact or truth for our encouragement, and telling us about the "immutability of His counsel" in saving every true believer in Christ. He speaks of God, as declaring His counsel and confirming it by an oath, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us[e]." To be untrue is therefore a thing impossible with God; and to perform any act whatever,

[e] Hebrews vi. 18.

inconsistent with His perfections and with His attributes as God, is a thing which He cannot do.

But we must proceed a little further still, if we would rightly apprehend the text, and several other sayings in the Scripture, or if we would rightly apply them.

When God has determined in Himself to adopt and to execute any one certain plan, in preference to other plans, or in exclusion of them, it is then impossible that it should not be fulfilled, or that any other should be substituted in its place. Hear God speaking of Himself in this very light! "I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed[f]." That is, because I am God, and because I do not change, and because I have formed, am carrying out, and must fulfil my purposes of grace, as to my people Israel, therefore, therefore I spare them, and do not consume them, in spite of all their sins and transgressions. So, in His purpose of mercy to Lot and his family, the Lord granted him Zoar as his refuge; but, at the same time, urged him out of Sodom, so soon to be consumed "by brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven:" "Haste thee: escape thither (i. e. to Zoar): for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither[g]." And to take an illustration or two, of the same kind, from the purpose and plan of God—the grand purpose and plan of redemption—as told in the New Testament. There we find Jesus,

[f] Mal. iii. 6. [g] Genesis xix. 22.

when taken prisoner, declaring that He could pray to the Father, who would "presently send more than twelve legions of angels" for his defence. But His being captured, and His being crucified, was a part of God's plan of redemption for our souls; and therefore it was impossible for Jesus to ask this. His undertaking of infinite love made it impossible. He could not do it, if He was to be our Saviour—if He was to suffer for us, and to be captured, and to be crucified, and if we were to be saved. And He Himself puts this question, as of an impossible thing: "How then"—i. e. if I am thus preserved from capture and from crucifixion—"how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be[h]?" And to break or nullify the Scripture, in one jot or tittle, was to Jesus an impossible thing. He could not do it.

One more example will suffice—rather two or three references bearing on the same truth.

In the last chapter of St. Luke we find Jesus thus speaking to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory[i]?"—i. e. was it not needful, essential, indispensable for the glory of God in and through Jesus our Redeemer, and for our salvation, that He should suffer first and then be glorified. So, in the same chapter, we find Jesus opening the understanding of His people, and saying unto them; "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer,

[h] Matt. xxvi. 52, 53. [i] Luke xxiv. 26.

and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem[k]." And we find St. Paul ever carrying forth and enforcing the same truth in his preaching, "opening and alleging (to use the words of Scripture) that Christ must needs have "suffered, and risen again from the dead[l]." In God's purpose of grace—in God's plan of His redeeming love, effected by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, it was impossible that it should be otherwise. It could not be.

So in the text which I have chosen, not so much for itself only, as to offer these remarks on a subject of no common interest. I have offered them too in explanation of a difficulty meeting us frequently in the Word of God, and I may add, not only in the letter, but in its spirit and general design. The text tells us, that in a certain place, where the words and ministry of Jesus ought to have been received with all readiness, gladness, and living faith, He "could there do no mighty work, save that He laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them." It was not that the criminal and inexcusable unbelief which the Nazarenes shewed, diminished in any way the power of Jesus, as God. In one sense, He could have done all signs, wonders, and miracles among them, just as much as if they had all been the very equals of Abraham in faith—as if they had all of them been right worthy of a place in that glo-

[k] Luke xxiv. 47. [l] Acts xvii. 3.

rious catalogue of believing saints, whose names shine for ever in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, and Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthae, with "David also, and Samuel, and the prophets," who all died and all lived in faith, just condemning the Nazarenes' unbelief. In one sense—i. e. as to the mere power of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether all these saints were around Him, or the unbelieving Nazarenes, it would have made no difference at all to Him: for all power was in Himself: but in another sense—namely, in that on which I dwell now, it was impossible for Him to accomplish His mighty acts. For it was consistent with His will—it was His purpose, His system, His plan to act according to the faith given unto men. What, for instance, was the word which opened the blind man's eyes? "According to your faith be it unto you[m]." What was the word to the ruler of the synagogue ere the restoration of his daughter to life? "Be not afraid: only believe." What was the testimony to the centurion when his servant was healed? "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel[n]." Such was the Lord's plan—to act on faith, and not on unbelief—and I trust that now all difficulty is explained, and I trust that we see how the power of Jesus is not impugned at all; and how all was done by Him, in perfect harmony and in all consistency with Himself and His work, when we find that at Naza-

[m] Matt. ix. 29. [n] Luke vii. 9.

reth, at His own city, where He had been brought up, and which was in one sense so mightily honoured, but, in another, so condemned; "He could do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them."

It only now remains that we should apply to ourselves that practical and solemn lesson, which is inseparably bound up with these truths. Which lesson is, that God will and must act for ever in perfect agreement with Himself, as revealed to us in His Word—that it is impossible for Him to act otherwise—that He cannot do it. If therefore He has said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,"—if He has said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"—if He has said, "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that hath sent Him"—if He has said, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord"—if He has said, that "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"—then be well assured that no power in the whole universe can or will change or supersede one of such principles, on which men shall be judged hereafter. I believe, or, rather, I know, that there is, in many minds, a lurking thought, and a vague impression, if not an absolute though delusive hope, that all God's purposes, and all God's will, as revealed in Scripture, may not be applied to themselves—that in some way or other, undefined though it be, they will escape the woe and retribution, plainly denounced against all who reject or neglect the Gospel and

shew before God and man the state of unbelief, like that or worse than that of the Nazarenes, among whom Jesus "could do no mighty work." They may dream of some strange work of mercy hereafter, but surely as God is true, it will be impossible. Such a delusion cannot come to pass or be a real thing. Oh! what a blessing it would be if this remembrance should come to any trifler now, in the power of the Holy Ghost, scatter away his vague and unreal hopes, and constrain him at once to "live a life of faith" in the Lord Jesus Christ, so that it may be possible for him to be saved, which is impossible in his present state! But as this train of thought is most awful, if not overwhelming, though most needful to remember and apply, so also the opposite train of thought is a most joyful thing to all true believers in Christ, and most confirmatory of all their blessedness. It is impossible for one good thing to fail out of the "all things," which are theirs for ever through Jesus their Lord. Eternal pardon is theirs. Eternal peace is theirs. Eternal glory is theirs. The covenant of grace is theirs—in all things "ordered and sure." No one is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand. They are Christ's, and Christ is theirs—and it is impossible—it cannot be that they should lose Him, or He lose them for ever! Oh! may God grant that these impossibilities, on which I have now dwelt, may adequately warn us, or adequately gladden us, as may be our respective case—warn us in time, if we are like the Nazarenes in their unbelief and

disregard of the Saviour—gladden us, if faithful, and of that number who have received him, and who believe in His name, unto the salvation of our souls! "The word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God[o]." "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back[p]?" And the message of God is ever one and the same: "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." But "say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings[q]." In these declarations there is no uncertainty, nothing indefinite. It is all "*shall be.*" And therefore I speak unto the impenitent in the language of earnest love, as concerning their souls. No longer presume, lest it should be ill with you for ever! And therefore I say unto all, who in spirit and in truth are serving the Lord, No longer doubt! No longer fear! No longer be disquieted—but live in the full assurance of faith, that, in and through Jesus your Redeemer, it shall and must be well for you unto all eternity. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting[r]." The thing is sure. It is *impossible* that it should be otherwise.

[o] Ezekiel xii. 28.
[p] Isaiah xiv. 27.
[q] Isaiah iii. 10, 11.
[r] Gal. vi. 8.

SERMON VI.

JESUS AT NIGHT.

JOHN VII. 53. VIII. 1.

And every man went unto his own house.
Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

HERE are two brief, simple statements telling about the close of a certain day on which our Lord Jesus Christ so spoke and acted as the seventh chapter of St. John's Gospel records. If we look to the thirty-seventh verse, we shall see that it was the last day of the feast of tabernacles. Jesus had gone up from Galilee to this feast, though he knew so well that in Jerusalem, where the feast was held, persecution of all kind awaited him, and that many there were seeking His death. Nevertheless, fulfilling His mission of Divine love for us, He went up, and, having endured much contradiction from His enemies during the previous days, He nevertheless still frequented the temple, and still taught the people. "In the last day, that great day of the feast," He stood amidst the vast concourse gathered there, "and cried, saying, If any man

thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly (i. e. from his heart, wherein Jesus by the Spirit dwells) shall flow rivers of living water." When He had thus spoken, there was, as usual, a division because of Him. Some believed Him, and some believed Him not. Some said, "Of a truth this is the Prophet," i. e. the One great Prophet whom Moses had announced. Others maintained that this was impossible, because Jesus came out of Galilee—they not knowing that He was born in Bethlehem. Some of them would have taken Him prisoner. And the Pharisees and chief priests sent officers to capture Him. But they would not, and they could not do it, so great was the dignity and majesty of His words. But the Pharisees derided and rebuked their own messengers. Nicodemus himself, notwithstanding his rank, and although he was one of them, did not escape their reviling, because, in a measure, he took the part of Jesus, and stood up for that which was righteous and just regarding Him. The day was now ended: and then follows the account of the text; "Every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the mount of Olives."

And why, let me ask, is this statement given—or rather, I should say, these two statements; first, as to the people who had heard Jesus speak in the temple, or who had had any thing to do with Him that day—secondly, about Jesus Himself? This shall be the subject of our inquiry now; and

may the Holy Spirit guide us as we proceed; for, if I do not err, it will present the Saviour to our view in the most impressive and affecting light, calculated well to touch our hearts with some sympathy towards Him, with some fellowship with His sufferings, need, and humiliation on our account.

"Every man went unto his own house." There is one of these two statements. God has said, "It is not good for man to be alone." He has bestowed on man all those ties of kindred and relationship, on which so much of human happiness depends—for what would man be without the development and exercise of his affections? God has given to the human race the ties of near kindred in parents and children, in husbands and wives, in brethren and sisters. It is written also, as one of His rich boons, that "He setteth the solitary in families." And He gives men their homes—some wealthier, and some humbler—some, of course, more and some less attractive in their form and character, but to each a home; and if it be not for the sin and fault of its inmates, or for trials of some special kind, a happy home too. And to this home, whether rich or poor, multitudes look with all satisfaction and glad anticipation after the duties or labours of the day. And when, perhaps, they are called afar off, no engagement which meets them, and no scene which interests them, so engages, interests, and pleases them as their return to their family and home. And while none but the true godly

man can have a sanctified home, or has any right to expect God's blessing in it, still He, who "maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," continues to pour down His benefits on many a home, whence no note of praise, love, or gratitude ever rises up towards His throne in heaven. For these are His natural gifts unto the family of man over the face of the earth: and from the first day, when the newborn infant is taken to a mother's arms in all love and tenderness, to the last hour, when the aged, patriarchal man renders up his breath amidst his children and his children's children, gathered around his bed, it is to the home and to the family, as God's ordinance, that we are indebted for so large a share of this world's happiness. Let us remember this, as we look back to the crowd at Jerusalem, each returning, after the great day of the feast, unto his own home in the holy city or in the villages around!

But now behold One wending His solitary way to a very different scene! The next verse speaks of Him: "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives." Now, that we may view this contrasted narrative in a right spirit, and with true sympathy for Jesus Christ our Lord, we must remember and apply the truth, that He, the Son of God, on taking our human nature upon Him, became "like unto us in all things, sin only excepted." It is written; "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took

part of the same[a]." "Verily, He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren[b]." Now this truth, thus positively and explicitly declared in the second chapter of the Hebrews, is implied and brought before us in the whole history of Jesus as man. Without entering into this truth, without knowing it, without keeping it in mind—nay more, without feeling it in the depths of our own hearts and experience, we can know little of our Saviour's humiliation and sufferings. Therefore, without this, we shall love Him little as He should be loved for all which He endured for us, when He left His celestial abode, and came into this world, that He might bruise the old serpent's head, bring many sons unto glory, be made the Captain of our salvation, "perfect through sufferings," both inward and outward. Let us remember this, as a fact—as a reality just as much as if one of us was described under such trials, when we are told in the Scripture how Jesus hungered, and how He thirsted, and how He sighed, and how He wept, and how He groaned in spirit, and how He was grieved with the hardness of men's hearts, how He was ultimately seized, taken prisoner, brought up as guilty at the bar of His unjust judges, and given up to be mocked, reviled, crowned with thorns, scourged, and crucified. In this—in all this—bodily and mentally, He had to endure all, and in much of it

[a] Heb. ii. 14. [b] Heb. ii. 16, 17.

infinitely *more* than that which human feeling would or could have suffered under such trials and perhaps *less* in no single instance.

Now the language of the text—"Jesus went unto the mount of Olives"—brings Him before us in two aspects of His self-denial, when for us He became a sojourner on earth, a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." First, it tells us that He had no home—literally speaking, no home or dwelling. Nor is this homelessness passed by without notice in Scripture. St. Paul enumerates it as one of his own privations for Christ's sake, that he had "no certain dwelling-place." His was a missionary life. And Jesus thus spake of Himself: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich[c]." His was a life of dependence on others, not the less trying because self-chosen, any more than the other parts of His humiliation and suffering, all self-chosen, but all needful for accomplishing His work "for us men and our salvation." This evening, at all events, no home received Jesus. Perhaps none invited Him—no Levi perhaps, no Zacchæus was there when all went to their own homes. This night, at all events, Jesus went not to the dwelling of His friends at Bethany. This night, at all events, that passage in the Song of Solomon, telling of the night watches of the Saviour,

[c] 2 Cor. viii. 9.

had its accomplishment: "My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night[d]." But this is not all which is conveyed by the statement that "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives." These words tell us of His homeless life in another aspect. They tell us of that which concerned His feelings within not less than of that which concerned His bodily wants. They tell us that He came not to gather around Himself those happy and endearing relationships which He Himself, in His creating and bountiful love, formed and bestowed on the family of man. He had no doubt a reputed father among men, and in his dwelling Jesus was brought up; but little do we know of him, except his good character and humble lot in despised Galilee. He had a mother; but in His early infancy trial came upon her through Him; and she was prophetically told, that on His account the sword of earthly sorrow should pierce her own soul. He had brethren according to the flesh: but they did not believe on Him. He had fellow-citizens, even the Nazarenes—but they absolutely sought His destruction. He had friends, disciples, and followers, but chosen from the humblest class; and they were ignorant, and dull of hearing, and often full of unbelief; and when the time of probation came "they all forsook Him and fled," while one denied Him. His seed, though to be numerous as the very dewdrops from the "womb of the

[d] Cant. v. 2.

morning," was to be a spiritual seed, brought to life, to heaven and to glory through His sufferings. In this, as in all other things, Jesus was the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"—sojourning on earth, and doing upon it His glorious work of Divine love, but finding for Himself neither rest nor home.

I repeat it, neither rest nor home. With His days we have not here to do, though we know full well how they were employed—in labours of all kinds for the sick, the suffering, and sinful—in teaching the ignorant, in bearing the "contradiction of sinners against Himself," in withdrawing from His enemies when He had spoken His appointed words and done His appointed deeds. No rest for Jesus nor home by day. But trace Him to His nightly solitudes! Trace Him, for instance, into the wilderness, fasting forty days and forty nights, "with the wild beasts" as His companions, tempted of the devil! Follow Him again to the garden of Gethsemane, whither He went by night! Was it a resting-place for Him? No, it was a place where He was "sorrowful and very heavy"—"where His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death"—"where His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"—where He was in agony—contending, as He did, for us, against all the powers of the evil one. And though this was an hour of peculiar strife, still we hear, in another place, that Jesus "continued all night in prayer unto

God;" and when we are specially told of one and another night which Jesus spent in remote and retired places, and with this also remember that it was our heavy burden which He bore, our heinous sins for which He made His intercession, and our great glory and happiness which He sought in prayer to the Father, then we may in a measure—though it be small indeed—yet, in a measure, realize and feel what the Scriptural narrative conveys, when in one verse we are told, that at the close of the day "every man went unto his own house," and in the next, that "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives."

Let us now apply these remembrances! Let us lay them to our hearts; for though we must first, of course, understand them with the head, it is in the heart that they must dwell and live and move, so as to be effectual. No remembrance, no principle, no motive in the whole world is so cogent and strong for the accomplishment of God's work in us and of God's work by us, as love to Jesus. It is written: "Love is the fulfilling of the law[e]." If you are commanded to do any one thing for a person towards whom you feel no particular affection, you will do that thing, if he has authority, and if it is right to be done. There, however, your acts for that person will end. But if you really love another, you will seek to please that person in all things! This will be your business, your privilege, your de-

[e] Romans xiii. 10.

light. This will give you an inward satisfaction scarcely to be described. So it is when we really and truly love Christ. He appeals to this motive Himself: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Again He saith: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." He would not have her[f] troubled, who poured the rich and costly ointment on His head. Why? She did it in love. "Lovest thou Me?" was the test, as to the reality of his repentance for the denial of his Lord, which Jesus put to Peter at the sea of Galilee. St. Paul forwards the same note, on the value, character, and strength of this holy love. "The love of Christ constraineth us." Again, when he tells what is not available nor acceptable to God, he also tells us what is: namely, "faith working by love[g]:" not a mere barren, cold, intellectual faith, but faith seated in the heart no less than in the understanding—filling the whole inward man with love to Jesus, so as to sway, so as to actuate the whole course of life. Neither is St. John silent on this mighty truth: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us[h]." And therefore he takes it as a conclusive thing, and the mark of all true believers in Christ: "We love Him because He first loved us." Accordingly, though I would be the very last person to undervalue in the least degree appeals to the understanding—and though I hold it as absolutely

[f] Matt. xxvi. 10. [g] Gal. v. 6. [h] 1 John iii. 16.

needful to have the mind occupied with a clear view of the Gospel, and of Christ's person, and of our unspeakable obligations unto Him through the Divine plan of redemption: and though I should consider that any course of preaching, which omitted or neglected this province of instruction, might be likened to a body without sinew or bone, or to a mass of foliage and leaves without stem or branch, (if such things could be,) still, I, for one, would much rather be enabled to speak five words in the name of Jesus, and with power to any man's heart, than ten thousand words merely to his understanding. Yes! I should expect much more fruit and results from them—much more devotion to the Saviour, much more service rendered unto Him, much more of good works done to glorify His holy name. And now you will clearly perceive why I have chosen my text of to-day, and why I have pursued the subject before us now. It is as a new claim upon our gratitude and sympathy and love towards Jesus Christ. It is that we may enter into a fresh province and department of His humiliation, destitution, self-denial on our own account. Therefore it was that He left the bosom of the Father and all the blessedness of His heavenly home. Therefore it was that He became on this earth a stranger and a wanderer, "despised and rejected of men"—depending on others as to His bodily need, and though so loving Himself, having no centre of love and relationship in which

to dwell and repose. Let us then not only dwell on the more peculiar and conspicuous acts of our Saviour's life, but on His whole person, on His whole spirit, on His whole character, work and condition on the earth. This will help to maintain our love and gratitude towards Him. And let us seek to apply each truth regarding Him in its proper place. For instance, when we feel the burden of our sin, let us remember His cross. When we are enjoying peace with our Father and God, remember who obtained it, who is "our Peace." When we rise heavenward in spirit, remember who rose again, that in spirit as well as in body we might rise also. When we are enjoying the guidance of the Holy Ghost, let us remember that He is the "promise of the Father," promised unto the Son for our sanctification. When we are living happily, let us remember who lived sorrowfully: and remember, when dying happily, who died for us "even the death of the cross." So also, let us seek to apply those especial truths, as to Jesus our Lord, which we have now surveyed. When we are living in comfort and prosperity, with a home to retire to at night, with a father or a mother, or a brother or a sister, or a wife or a child to welcome us, let us remember who went at evening's close to the solitary mount, there to pass the night, making intercession with strong supplication and prayers. Let us remember that without Him we have no reason to think that any imaginable

blessing would have remained on the earth after the fall of man. Nor let these remembrances be without practical effect; but, on the contrary, so far as in us lies, let us seek that our dwelling and abode, wheresoever it may be, shall be a sanctified place, sanctified by ourselves, and by those around us—a home of prayer, and praise, and holiness, and love, and manifest devotion to our Saviour's name and to our Saviour's commands. But, again, should we be more like one who is solitary, homeless and destitute—should we have met or be encountering now any bereavements or disappointments in our domestic ties and affections, then let us seek strength, consolation and support from the life of Jesus! Let us remember how He, not by knowledge only, but by experience, can and will be most sensitively touched by the feeling of our sorrows, infirmities and needs. Much concerning Him, as to be thus viewed, is specially written in God's Word for us in the touching history of His life and conduct. Let us ponder over these accounts! Let us make them our own by due meditation! Let us employ them in our own case and emergency! Let us cry unto Him from our depths, howsoever deep! He "will not fail us nor forsake us!" Let us tell Him with opened, enlarged and confiding heart, all that oppresses, disturbs and disquiets us—all the contest which we have to wage with our wants, with our trials, with all failures in our hopes at the present time, and

with all sad foreboding, as to future times and emergencies. Let us thus act towards Jesus Christ, our Almighty, ever-present, ever-sympathizing friend; and we shall find Him ever willing, able and mighty to cheer and console us! He will supply us with strength to meet and bear, in a right spirit, all laid upon us by the hand of Divine love. Looking to Him, we shall be enlightened and never ashamed of our hope; for the Lord will hear us and He will save us out of all our troubles. Thankful, truly thankful shall I be, if any thing said now should tend, by the help and power of the Holy Spirit, to draw any one for the first time in sympathy and gratitude towards Jesus Christ His Saviour; or if it should present Him to any heart in one aspect more of His love and endurance, as man, for us, among those who already know Him and love Him. Should that prove the effect of this sermon, I shall consider it highly honoured indeed. And I now conclude with one single thought drawn expressly from the text. Yes, I could say, as each evening closes around your homes, and finds you in the midst of all your blessings, all your privileges, temporal, social, moral and spiritual, Oh! fail not to remember Him who lived and suffered alone in spirit on this earth for you! Remember that one Lord, Friend, Deliverer and Mediator, by whose death you have life — by whose sorrows you have your joys — by whose night of toil and weeping (if I may

use the expression for Christ's sojourn on earth) you have all your happiness now, and not only this, but a sure hope of an eternal day of joy and beatitude in heaven.

SERMON VII.

JESUS AND THE THREE WHOM HE RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

LUKE VII. (part of 22nd verse.)

The dead are raised.

THE restoration of life to a dead body is an act, not only out of the ordinary course of nature, but so exceedingly far removed from that course, that it pleased our Saviour only to perform it three times during the whole period of His earthly ministry. He constantly repeated His miracles in healing the sick people "that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils"—and we hear of His being engaged day after day in "curing all manner of sickness among the people"—and the testimony to His work was, that He made the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear. Indeed all kinds of lost faculties, both of body and mind, were given back by Him; and from the Scriptural record it appears that vast indeed was the number of these restorations. But of His raising the dead only three instances appear: and when we consider the grandeur and import-

ance of such an act, I think we may conclude that no instances occurred of such a miracle being performed by Jesus, which were untold by the inspired narrators of His deeds[a]. For to tell them was their very office, as witnesses. Let us now briefly consider those three instances, endeavouring to mark the special character and circumstances of each, in succession, and still more earnestly seeking profit for ourselves in the renewing and strengthening of our faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit, while we thus bring to mind this threefold work of that Lord and Saviour, who came, among other things, to be the "destruction of death," and to "bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel." For these three restorations are grand signs and types of our resurrection too.

At an early stage of our Lord's ministry, we find that "there came a certain ruler," (i. e. a ruler of the synagogue,) "and worshipped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed Him, and so did His disciples." St. Mark describes the father as speaking of his child being "at the point of death;" and St. Luke says, that she "lay a dying." All this, however, may be seen to correspond exactly; for at one moment the afflicted

[a] No argument can be brought against this view from the fact that St. John alone tells of the raising of Lazarus. Many and convincing reasons have been given to account for that, and appear in all commentators.

father uses one expression, and at the next another—first telling her state when he left her to all appearance dying, and next her state when he spoke, as one by that time most certainly dead.

On the way to the house of Jairus, virtue coming out from Jesus healed the disease of the woman, who had suffered twelve years from the issue of blood. But on that we must not delay. We must accompany the steps of Jesus to the ruler's house, where death had preceded Him.

While He was yet speaking[b] to the woman whom He had cured on the way, there came messengers from the ruler's house, who said to Him, "Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?" But Jesus supported his faith, saying to him, "Be not afraid, only believe."

When they arrived at the house, the minstrels were there—i. e. the wailers by profession, who attended at deaths and at funerals with their dirges and chaunts of lamentation; and there was a great tumult of sorrow, the people all weeping and wailing greatly. But Jesus spoke words to calm and compose: "Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth:"—no doubt, as at another time, with regard to Lazarus, referring to the fact that death was no termination of our existence, but merely, as it were, a sleep. Another evangelist tells us how He uttered the same words of comfort, which again, on a similar occasion, He spake: "Weep not." Then with

[b] Mark v. 35.

Peter and James and John, as the intended witnesses of His deed; and with the father and mother of the damsel, as the chief mourners, to whom she specially belonged; and in the midst of scoffing and of scorn, Jesus entered into the room where the damsel, just dead, was lying, and thus addressed her: "Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise." And straightway she arose, and walked; and all were astonished with a great astonishment. And thus the beloved and the only child of her parents gladdened their hearts as a living child once more, and faith met its abundant reward; and a fresh testimony rose to the power of the Lord Jesus Christ; and death, for a season, lost its prey, and God was glorified among men.

Three separate evangelists give us the narratives regarding that event on which I have just spoken. From each I have gathered certain and distinct circumstances, not told by the others, so as to complete the account. Thus we should always act, when more than one record of the same history appears. The two next instances of raising the dead are, each of them, told only by one among the four evangelists. The raising of the son of the widow of Nain is the next. That is found in the Gospel of St. Luke, vii. 11—16.

Nain was a city not far from Capernaum, unknown for any other act of the Saviour, or indeed for any other narrative, in connexion with it, which the Scripture presents. But its very name awakens at once in our hearts the most lively sympathy, if we can feel for a mother's

grief, or can rejoice in our Saviour's deeds of compassionate power and love. As Jesus was entering into this city, many disciples and much people being in his company, "behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier"—i. e. the open frame on which the dead and uncovered body is carried in the East—"and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great Prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people." And here I need only remark, on this mighty and most touching history, that, if you will attentively observe it, a progress and advance appears, when it is compared with that brought before us just now. Deeper was the woe —more grievous the bereavement. In the preceding instance an only daughter had died: but still both parents lived, dear to one another, and able to offer mutual consolation at the loss of their child. But, in this instance, as the poet hath well said of the mourner;

"Widowed and childless, she had lost her all."

Who can adequately tell the depth of her sorrow? Who, except one, similarly tried, can fully describe the extent of her bereavement? But Je-

sus knew all; and in His great mercy and discriminating love, He restored her son.

In another point also there was a progress and advance. In the case of the daughter of Jairus the damsel was only just dead. In this second instance, death, no doubt, had held a longer sway over the poor human frame—not so long as we might suppose from our own funerals, often protracted for several days, but in all probability for many hours, if not for a full day and night. The sceptic and the unbeliever might have said that the damsel was only revived from a transient swoon; but here dissolution had been of a longer date. A word, however, was spoken by the Lord of life, and the dead man lived again. In the case of Lazarus I shall have more to say on this subject. Therefore I shall now only add, that there was also a progress and advance in the number of witnesses who saw the miracle with their own eyes. In the former instance five only beheld the very act done; and it was performed in the chamber of sickness and death. In this latter instance many disciples, and much people in the company of Jesus, and much people of the city in the mourning train, all beheld the miracle: and it was done in the place of "chief concourse"—in the public thoroughfare, in the well-known highway from the crowded city of the living to the not less crowded abode and cemetery of the dead.

One more and one only did Jesus raise from the dead during His sojourn on the earth. "A certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany,

the town of Mary and her sister Martha." The time of this sickness was just at the conclusion of our Saviour's ministry. Jesus loved the family to which Lazarus belonged, and seems often to have taken up His abode in their house. When informed first that Lazarus was sick, he was in Galilee, at a considerable distance from Bethany, a small town, or village, not far from Jerusalem. The sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, "sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." The whole subsequent history of this miracle is so very well known, that I do not think it requisite to enter on it in detail. I would, however, remark, as specially connected with the present subject, that, after Jesus had heard of Lazarus being sick, "He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Then He went down into Judæa. And when He reached Bethany, "He found that Lazarus had laid in his grave four days already." I pass over all that blessed and consolatory narrative, telling of all His sympathy and love towards the mourners and bereaved. I pass over too all that glorious doctrine on the resurrection unto eternal life, assured to every believer in Christ; and I go on to the performance of His miraculous act. Jesus "cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone." Martha now interrupts.

In her knowledge that her brother's death was no recent thing of a few hours or even of a day—in her experience, such as easterns all have, as to what corruption does in a brief period of time—in her utter hopelessness, or at all events in faltering faith, of receiving her brother, as a living brother again in this present world, she thus addressed Jesus: "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes[c]: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

Such was the third and last raising from the dead at the living voice of Jesus Christ on the earth. The publicity of this act was so great, its glory so conspicuous, and its fitness to prove the

[c] "When Lazarus was raised, it is said that he came forth bound hand and foot with graveclothes, to note that he was not out as a victor over death, unto which he came to return again; but when Christ rose, he left them behind, because death was to have no more power over him." Reynolds, Life of Christ, 523–4.

mission of the Saviour so evident to all eyes, that immediately it follows: "many which had seen the things which Jesus did believed on Him." This is the bright point. The dark one is next told. And no darker spot or blot ever stained and defiled the history of fallen man. "Some of them"—informers, watching Jesus for evil, and, perhaps, in the Pharisees' pay—"some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles." Like so many proud and selfish spirits of all ages and climes, they could not bear to be cast into the shade, nor to lose their influence. They could not brook one superior to themselves. And led by the advice of the wicked Caiaphas, who spurned all justice and truth with the word "expedient"—(branded among us ever since, and rightly branded too, as a word of infamy) "they from that day forth took counsel to put Jesus to death." And in their design they succeeded, for the powers of darkness were with them, and they were to have their hour, in which to bruise the heel of the Son of man — and if the Scriptural history is in our mind with any accuracy, we shall remember that Lazarus being raised, instrumentally and in God's purpose, led to Jesus being crucified. And Lazarus, coming forth from the tomb, was the preparation for Jesus to enter the sepulchre of death. And when we remember why, and why only—i. e. on our

account—Jesus underwent all this humiliation, we, I trust, shall thankfully and gladly see this third and this last restoration of the dead to life, all brightened and coloured with fresh hues and marks of our Saviour's devotion and love towards us, as shewn at the grave of Lazarus.

I have not yet observed (but we should err did we not do so) that in each of those three miracles, now considered by us, the word of power and life, which Jesus spoke, was not only such a word of authority that death obeyed, but it was also a word spoken in His own name. "Damsel, *I* say unto thee, Arise." "Young man, *I* say unto thee, Arise." "Lazarus, come forth." No messenger from heaven, except One, who was God Himself, could or would have ever spoken thus. He would have spoken in the name of God. To have done less would have been blasphemy—would have been the very claim to that divinity in whom alone is the fountain of life and power to restore it. But Jesus, being God, speaks here in His own Name—so speaks in all three instances. He came, do doubt, to do His Father's will. He came, no doubt, living by the Father. He came, do doubt, acting as the Shiloh, One sent. And as coming for a mission like this, He ever described Himself. Nevertheless, in the great conspicuous and notably divine act of raising the dead to life, He ever spoke as One, in whose own will, word and power was life; and though we may want no fresh testimonies to Christ's divinity—for I write and speak for those who feel the absurdity

not less than the sin of any other supposition or creed — still here a fresh testimony is before us, all ready, full, and glorious; and in the very words spoken at the house of Jairus the ruler, and at the gate of the city of Nain, and at the tomb of Lazarus in Bethany, the Godhead of Jesus appears no less than in each miraculous deed.

I would now make a personal and practical use of these considerations. On what have we been engaged? Has it been on some speculative doctrine? No, certainly not. Has it been on some question, truth, or history, interesting no doubt, but in which we had no concern ourselves? No, certainly not. Have the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son, and Lazarus no type in them, no symbol for us, which shall assuredly be fulfilled in us? Indeed they have. Have the word and the act of Jesus, in raising them, no reference to us, living now on the earth? Surely they have. We too must soon put off this earthly tabernacle —give up our breath, like the damsel on her bed —lie down in our coffin, like the young man of Nain—occupy our own dark tomb, like Lazarus, wherever it may be or of whatsoever kind: for that indeed is of little moment. "But the hour is coming"—to use the Saviour's own words —"in the which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Oh! to some, most glorious day!

Oh! to others, most woful day! I enter not here into any questions of detail or dispute, such as the exact season, when the righteous and the wicked shall respectively rise, but I use the word in its widest sense. The time of each event is only a minor thing. Let us now dwell with fixed mind and heart on the broad and great reality that we ourselves shall and must rise again, at the voice of the Son of man, either to eternal bliss or eternal misery. Let us fasten and concentrate our thoughts, by the Spirit's help, on this sure reality and truth, to be fulfilled in every one of us! Let us look to Jesus our Saviour, in and through His three miracles in raising the dead upon this earth, as One who shall hereafter raise our bodies too for their future glory! Let us often meditate on our own future resurrection in the flesh! Let us look at our own bodies, saying and feeling of them —"This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Let us live and labour with an eye to that day, knowing that our "labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." These are the very words—the one single application with which the grand chapter on the body's resurrection ends! Let us rise up to the privileges which are ours as belonging to a risen Saviour! Let us follow after holiness and righteousness in all things; and may we be preserved from the doom of the ungodly and the impenitent sinner, rising, as he must, to the "resurrection of damnation!" May we hear with unspeakable joy the

voice of the Saviour, in the day of His majesty and glory: "Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: Come, My people." And may we, with glorified spirit and glorified body in one, once more become living souls, in all the perfection of the saints—in a state of blessedness beyond that of paradise, even as redemption, in which the saved shall stand for ever, outshines creation itself, as shewing the love and wondrous attributes of God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

We have seen in all this the full power of Jesus over death in every stage of its existence and dominion over man. He restored the daughter of Jairus to life, immediately after her spirit had departed—the widow's son, whom they were carrying forth to his burial—Lazarus, when, according to nature, corruption had begun. Through Him too, who opened the gates of death, the "graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints, which slept, arose." And to crown all this evidence, Jesus Himself, after He was crucified and had lain in the grave three days, came forth from the sealed and guarded tomb, and personally appeared unto very many witnesses. Since, therefore, Jesus liveth who was dead, and His words and His acts testify to His power of raising us from the dead also, let us not count it an incredible thing, nor (which is much more dangerous to us) treat it as being an unreal thing, that "all who are in their graves shall come forth." It matters little where our bodies may be laid. The sea may cover them: the narrow

coffin may encase them: corruption or other cause may reduce them to mere fragments or to nothing in man's eye—but in God's eye and power the germ and spring[d] of immortality will remain in them: and through that power of God all His people shall be raised, in the body, to everlasting joy. May the Spirit come mightily among us, and largely add to that blessed company!

[d] The amount of matter is not of the smallest consequence touching God's formation from it. Warburton (sermon II preached at Lincoln's Inn) quotes the observation, "that this whole globe of earth, nay, all the known bodies in the universe together, so far as we know, may be compounded of no greater portion of solid matter than might be reduced into a globe of one inch only in diameter or even less." Works, vol. ix. 37.

SERMON VIII.

SALVATION BY JESUS CHRIST A READY AND PREPARED THING.

LUKE XIV. 16, 17.

A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

THESE words were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ while He was sitting at meat in the house of one of the chief Pharisees on the Sabbath day. Almost all the instruction which He gave on that occasion is drawn from the subject of meals and entertainments. The perfection of His teaching is seen in such things; because instruction like this would have far more of reality, life and interest than that drawn from topics of a distant kind.

To illustrate what I say. In the seventh verse of this chapter we find Jesus teaching the need of humility. And how does He enforce it on "those which were bidden, when He marked how

they chose out the chief rooms," or places of distinction? He draws His instruction from a marriage feast. Again in the twelfth verse He inculcates all loving attention to the poor and destitute. And how does He do it? By telling of one act towards the rich—of another towards the poor. Thence He shews what the nature of God's dealings with us will be—what sort of conduct will meet a recompense from Christ at the "resurrection of the just," when all that has been done merely with self or the world as its object shall be viewed in its true colours, exposed, and rejected. We may well suppose that all His hearers would now have their minds enlivened and occupied, while Jesus was using such helps and lively illustrations towards the knowledge of divine things. This is proved in the fifteenth verse—"And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." And then once more, out of the abundance of His divine stores —out of the rich imagery of His thoughts, shaped into words by Him, "who spake as never man spake"—Jesus continues in the same strain. He again draws the doctrines of eternal and spiritual life from the subject of human feasts. He preaches the Gospel—the message of mercy from a reconciled God, through Himself, as our great Redeemer: and how does He do it? In the language of the text. "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his

servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready."

It was a custom, and may be so still[a], in the east, where there has always been more form in salutation and invitation, and mere outward matters of society than is usual in our western climes, for those who intended to give any grand feast (such as that which this parable describes) not only to engage their guests some time before, by due notice, but also to send a second invitation when the time of the festival came. This was to remind them of it, and to do them fresh honour. I mention this because it is possible that this custom may not be known generally: and yet without knowing it, the words of the seventeenth verse could hardly be understood, telling how the master of the feast "sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready." And I am glad to notice this, not only because it is a delightful thing either to learn ourselves or to communicate any thing which renders the words of Jesus more clear to our apprehension, but, besides this, because it appears to me that this custom, and

[a] Somewhat of the same custom may be traced in the subjoined notice: "Our invitation came early in the morning, which we thought strange: but we were informed that the first note of invitation meant nothing, but was merely intended as an announcement, to enable the guest to be prepared for the occasion. Between six and seven o'clock another messenger arrived, called the Zazywatz, or Reminder; and he delivered us another more formal invitation." Custom at Berezof, from the "Revelations of Siberia." Vol. i. 226.

these words of the parable very closely represent what God has done for man at successive periods. It seems to illustrate the great and leading plans by which He has revealed Himself, when inviting sinners to be saved and to sit down for ever in the blessedness of His kingdom. By Abel, by Enoch, by Noah, and by all the patriarchs, who were holy witnesses for God upon earth among their fellow men—by Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and by all who lived "a life of faith" in their day and generation — and perhaps, above all, by Moses the mediator of the old covenant—I say, that by all these saints, and specially by Moses, God, as it were, sent the first message, that men should come to Him, and partake of His mercies and gifts. This was the first message, sent by God, and brought by His servants, at various times, to mankind. But when the period came for the great Immanuel to visit this very earth—when He, who "at sundry times and in divers manner, had spoken in time past unto the fathers by the prophets[b]," sent His own Son—when Jesus arrived, taking on Himself the "form of a servant," and calling sinners to Himself, in whom all was ready and prepared for their eternal festival of joy—then it was that the second message came; and it said "to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready."

That parable, in which these words appear, is so perfectly well known to all who are acquainted

b Heb. i. 1.

with the Word of God, that I shall not think it needful to explain it in any detail. I have chosen it, chiefly, in order to shew, from the very words of our text, that the salvation of God is a finished thing, all ready and prepared for us to partake of by faith—also that Christ's invitation to sinners, like ourselves, is a present invitation, addressed to us, that we may now—at this present moment—receive all and every thing which God Himself has devised and accomplished for our present and eternal happiness. May the Spirit guide us while we consider this particular subject, out of the many subjects which the parable presents!

The first word of the text—the first sound we hear in it, is the very key-note of the whole Gospel. That word—that sound is, Come! God's message of mercy and grace has ever been delivered thus, not as a thing to be forced upon man, not as a thing of mere command, not as a legal necessity, (if I may so speak,) but as an invitation offered freely to all. When we use to another such an expression as "Come," it is the word of persuasion—of gentle dealing—of trust and expectation that no stern measure of compulsion fits the case or circumstances. So, in whatever shape God has sent forth the Gospel, or the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, it has always been in complete agreement with this word "Come." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters[c]." "Come unto Me, all

[c] Isaiah lv. 1.

ye that travail, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest[d]." "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely[e]." But not only is this truth contained in those passages which are characterised by the word itself. When Jesus saith: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me[f]"—when we hear of the apostle employed in persuading men just for this reason, because he knew so well the "terrors of the Lord"—when we hear of Christ's true and faithful ambassadors as beseeching "men to be reconciled with God"—when we can enter into the spirit of these gracious calls, then we can see and feel how the Gospel is an invitation, and not a stern command—a covenant of mercy and love—of which Jesus Himself, the Lamb on mount Sion, is the Head and Mediator, not "Moses descending from mount Sinai" with the stony tables of the fiery law[g]. May God grant us a clear and heartfelt perception of these things! May we rejoice in the character of that Gospel which God sends to us! May we bless His holy name for thus appealing to our hearts! May we praise Him more and more "not only with our lips, but in our lives"—yes, in our loving lives—finding the motive and principle of love ever stirring in us and constraining us to serve and obey Him, as our highest privilege[h]!

[d] Matt. xi. 28. [e] Rev. xxii. 17. [f] John xii. 32.
[g] Heb. xii. 18–23. [h] 2 Cor. v. 14.

Listen to His word, Come! Do not slight that invitation which is not man's, but God's! Do not slight that "plenteous redemption" offered by and in the Saviour! What a happy thing it would be were a minister entitled to believe that not one in any congregation which he is addressing could act so foolishly, so madly, so sinfully! But, at all events, we know how there is joy in heaven "over one sinner that repenteth." And surely we on earth may rejoice at each similar event — for one at one time, and for another at another time. Moreover, if we know the hardness of the human heart, then, instead of wondering that all do not turn at the Saviour's voice, our admiration will rather arise at every fresh instance of true conversion to God, and we shall remember that no one on earth would ever come to Him and be saved, were it not for the Spirit's invitation and the power of Divine grace.

But there is one special reason, given in the text, why souls are called upon to come. The invitation is, "Come." The reason immediately succeeds: "for all things are now ready." Let us consider that expression, "all things!" and, in considering it, our thoughts may immediately and appropriately turn to our Saviour's person and work. When Jesus visited our earth, He came, being God — "perfect God" — but manifest in the flesh, "perfect man" too. It is written, that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily[i]." And again, that "in Him are

[i] Colossians ii. 9.

hid" (that is, laid up) "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge[k]." When He was dying on the cross, what did He exclaim? "It is finished"—it—that is, the work of our redemption — the work which He came to perform. When He gave up the ghost, "the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," signifying unto us that in Him we have now all free, open access unto God—that we may now "come boldly unto the throne of grace" by the holy way sprinkled with our Saviour's blood[l]. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself;" and therefore nothing remains now to be done, on the part of God, in order to make salvation more full and complete than it is. Eternity itself could not make it better than it is. All the powers of the universe could add nothing to it—nothing to render it more glorious to God, or more adapted to man—nothing to increase its beauty—nothing which could add fresh lustre to its excellence. The law was to be kept. Jesus did keep it in every jot and in every tittle. Atonement for sin was required. Jesus made full atonement, offering up His own body once for all upon the cross, and so rendering a full, perfect and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Our Mediator was to rise, and to be accepted by the Father, and to receive "gifts for men." Jesus did rise, and was accepted, and sent down the "promise of the Father, even the Holy Ghost, on all who are

[k] Col. ii. 3. [l] Heb. ix. 8, and iv. 16.

to be saved. Marks and distinctions such as these were the chief features of the Messiah's work and of the Gospel: and "there remaineth no other sacrifice" for sin in the least needful—no other righteousness to be imputed to us in the least requisite. There is no one to come who is to keep the law, and honour it in the Father's sight, as Jesus did. There is no other Messiah to ascend into heaven, and make intercession for us, and to send upon us the rich blessings of the Spirit. Therefore, you see, all things were ready and prepared for us when Jesus had come, and when the Gospel was announced. Yes, I say "all things." Take a few of these all things—just a selection from the multitude—did I say, multitude?—rather should the word be infinity—of blessings comprehended in these simple words! Men needed pardon. That was among the all things; and that was ready for them: and whosoever believed in Jesus received a full and entire remission of sins. Men wanted peace with God, and could not obtain it by their own righteousness. Peace with God was among the all things which were found in the Gospel of a Saviour. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you," was His parting word. Men wanted strength; for they are of themselves without any ability to serve God acceptably. Strength was among the all things which were provided in the Lord Jesus Christ; for the "joy of the Lord is our strength[m]."

But the time would fail us in pursuing this

[m] Nehemiah viii. 10.

train of thought in all its mighty consequences. Each of us sinners not only needs pardon, and peace, and spiritual strength, and finds all these things ready and prepared for him in the Lord Jesus Christ; but he wants all graces, and all the fruits of the Spirit, and all good gifts, which become the children of God. Accordingly Jesus saith, "He that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit[n]." There is also a series and a successive course, or, at all events, a manifold variety in the wants of the soul. If men, for instance, after their conversion, live on, they want the presence of God, and His favour and blessings in this life present. And these are among the all things ready and prepared for them in and through their Saviour. And if they die, they want a paradise, whither their spirits may go, and where they may abide in rest and happiness with their Almighty Friend and Almighty Saviour unto the glad morning of the resurrection day. And this place of rest is among the all things. And men want blessedness—an uninterrupted and unfailing eternity of joy in the kingdom of God. And this is among the all things. And can we go further? Or can we go higher? Or can we even imagine any other want for man, or any other loftier bliss, than such as I have spoken of. I can imagine—I can give you none—but if such can be conceived by you, or if such be in existence, they will and must every one of them be satisfied for man, and fulfilled for him

[n] John xv. 5.

in Christ Jesus the Lord. They will be among the "all things" of the text: and therefore, in the most perfect reality—in the utmost strictness of which language is capable, the invitation of Jesus sounds forth for our human ears, and our human understandings, and our human hearts; "Come, for all things are now ready."

But now let me inquire, with that true ministerial interest and care which the subject demands, and of which it is so well worthy—let me inquire, how does this invitation sound on your ears, on your understandings, and on your hearts? Is it a call without meaning for you and effect on you? or is it of a welcome and happy kind? Have you listened to it, and felt its accents come to you with power, or have you hitherto rejected it? Are you still as a sheep going astray, or have you returned to Christ "as the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls?" Are you still, as a prodigal, wasting your substance—not only your money, but your time, and your feelings, and thoughts, and your faculties—on worthless and common things—or have you returned to that same Father's home, to the enjoyment of His Almighty love, and to that course of life becoming a redeemed and beloved son? These, surely, are inquiries which ministers ought to put, or rather lead their hearers faithfully to put to themselves, with a view to an answer in the sight of God. If there is reason to fear that the answer, on your part, must be unfavourable, I would use to you at once the language of the text, in the Saviour's

name; "Come, for all things are now ready"—i. e. ready for you, ready for your safety from the wrath of God, ready for your peace, ready for your blessedness. We need not go further than the very parable before us for every encouragement which you can possibly desire. Ample and rich is the feast prepared; and, God be praised, many are enjoying it: but "yet there is room." There is a place prepared and vacant for you, if you desire to come and to occupy it! Jesus, on your account, has sent his servants forth with this message; "Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner." "Come unto the marriage." "All things are ready." Whether you dwell in some crowded city, or whether in some quiet country place of our land, the eye of Jesus rests on your abode. You are not unseen, unsought, uncared for by Him. It was His command to His messengers; "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city." "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled." If you feel your own sinfulness—your own poverty of all title to God's favour—your own entire destitution of any worthiness—your own lack of all graces and gifts, be it so! There is encouragement for you to come to the feast of the Gospel. Jesus specially sent his servants for the poor. "Bring in hither the poor." Do you feel how much you have suffered—how much your soul has been hurt by the assaults of Satan, by your contact with an evil world, by the harm which

in Christ Jesus the Lord. They will be among the "all things" of the text: and therefore, in the most perfect reality—in the utmost strictness of which language is capable, the invitation of Jesus sounds forth for our human ears, and our human understandings, and our human hearts; "Come, for all things are now ready."

But now let me inquire, with that true ministerial interest and care which the subject demands, and of which it is so well worthy—let me inquire, how does this invitation sound on your ears, on your understandings, and on your hearts? Is it a call without meaning for you and effect on you? or is it of a welcome and happy kind? Have you listened to it, and felt its accents come to you with power, or have you hitherto rejected it? Are you still as a sheep going astray, or have you returned to Christ "as the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls?" Are you still, as a prodigal, wasting your substance—not only your money, but your time, and your feelings, and thoughts, and your faculties—on worthless and common things—or have you returned to that same Father's home, to the enjoyment of His Almighty love, and to that course of life becoming a redeemed and beloved son? These, surely, are inquiries which ministers ought to put, or rather lead their hearers faithfully to put to themselves, with a view to an answer in the sight of God. If there is reason to fear that the answer, on your part, must be unfavourable, I would use to you at once the language of the text, in the Saviour's

name; "Come, for all things are now ready"—i. e. ready for you, ready for your safety from the wrath of God, ready for your peace, ready for your blessedness. We need not go further than the very parable before us for every encouragement which you can possibly desire. Ample and rich is the feast prepared; and, God be praised, many are enjoying it: but "yet there is room." There is a place prepared and vacant for you, if you desire to come and to occupy it! Jesus, on your account, has sent his servants forth with this message; "Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner." "Come unto the marriage." "All things are ready." Whether you dwell in some crowded city, or whether in some quiet country place of our land, the eye of Jesus rests on your abode. You are not unseen, unsought, uncared for by Him. It was His command to His messengers; "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city." "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled." If you feel your own sinfulness—your own poverty of all title to God's favour—your own entire destitution of any worthiness—your own lack of all graces and gifts, be it so! There is encouragement for you to come to the feast of the Gospel. Jesus specially sent his servants for the poor. "Bring in hither the poor." Do you feel how much you have suffered—how much your soul has been hurt by the assaults of Satan, by your contact with an evil world, by the harm which

and bountiful provisions which Jesus has made for all who believe in Him.

I trust that the subject of this day may more and more impress with the excellency and reality of that inestimable truth, spoken in parable by Christ; "All things are ready"—and spoken again by St. Paul to the Corinthians: "All things are yours;" "for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And again, "Ye are complete in Him." How sad—how unworthy it is to live so far, as most of us do, beneath those full and unspeakable privileges, all centered and summed up in such texts as these, and thus brought, as it were, to a focus of radiant light! How often we miss, in others and in ourselves too, that beaming, lively, soul-exhilarating joy, which ought to spring up and prevail whenever the full and free Gospel is heard or brought to mind! How often we experience such a deadness or deficiency in our welcome of these glorious truths and realities, that we may well ask of ourselves again and again, what imaginable blessing is there or can be which is not ours in and through our Saviour? What desire of the soul is not fulfilled in Him? Is there any exemption from evil which he has left unsecured to us? Is there any goodness, or gift, or privilege, either for this world, or for eternity, which is not laid up in Him for the believer's use? No, surely not! Away then for ever—such at least should our desire be—with all coldness, deadness, and dulness, at the remembrance of our happy state, when accepted in

Christ; for He is ours, and we are His: and in Him (as we have seen now) all things truly, substantially, and eternally good are ready and prepared for our use and benefit. It is for us freely to partake of them! It is for us fully to enjoy them. In these things there can be no excess. And if your peace and spiritual confidence are built on your Saviour, without intermixture of your own self-righteousness—if it is the Lord, in whom you truly rejoice[p]—then the happier you are, and the more assurance you have, the more you will please and glorify your God. Yes, I may add, (with all certainty,) the better you will serve Him: for, believe me, there is no strength, no diligence, no heartiness, and no perseverance in the service of God, comparable unto that which springs from and is maintained by peace, and love, and gratitude towards God, and abundant joy in our Saviour's Person and work.

[p] Phil. iv. 4.

SERMON IX.

CHRIST OUR LIFE NOW AND FOR EVER.

JOHN V. 24.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

EVERY saying of our Lord Jesus Christ is of unspeakable value and importance: and this is so evident to all, who are able to form any judgment on such a matter, that I should not even have made the observation, had it not been for another now to follow. Which is, that whenever we see the words "Verily, verily," introducing any sentence from His lips, (as is so frequently the case,) then we must remember that He Himself condescends to employ these words for the purpose of enforcing the most solemn and awakening interest in what He is about to say. If, accordingly, Jesus speaks of the new birth of the soul, He thus lays down the truth: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." If He speaks

of Himself as the great Witness from heaven unto mankind, it is so again: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that We do know, and testify that We have seen." Thus also the text is introduced. May we, through the Spirit, give it that attention which it claims with such an authoritative introduction! May we find an abundant blessing for our souls in the mighty declaration of our Lord: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

We may observe, that this statement of our Lord contains in it, first, the description of a certain character, and, next, three privileges which belong to every such character. The character is; "He that heareth my Word, and believeth on Him that sent me." The three privileges are, "everlasting life," freedom from condemnation, and a passage from death unto life, even in this present world. We will consider separately these distinct subjects.

First, we have the description of a certain character—"He that heareth my Word, and believeth on Him that sent me." Without this it is impossible to be a Christian at all. Fifteen hundred years before Jesus appeared in the world, Moses thus prophesied of Him in the Father's name: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto

them all that I command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him[a]." This Prophet was Christ; for a prophet was one who spake out God's will divinely and authoritatively; and the Prophet of prophets was Christ our Lord, the living Word. One passage from the New Testament to the same purpose: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son[b];" and it is soon asked, regarding that Gospel of mercy and love which the Son of God proclaimed in all its glory; "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord[c]?" Consistently with all this, the privileges of our text are inseparably joined with the hearing and obedient ear in regard to all things which Jesus spake. But not only must there be this true listening to the Saviour's word, as our great Prophet—as the Author of all true information in the concerns between God and our souls, but there must also be true living faith in God the Father just in the following light—as having sent Him to be the Saviour, through His blood, His merits, and His righteousness. The character described is not only that of one hearing the Word of Jesus, and allowing its goodness and its excellency, but also of one "believing on Him that sent Him."

[a] Deut. xviii. 18, 19. [b] Heb. i. 1. [c] Heb. ii. 3.

If we duly attend to the tenour of that discourse in which the text appears, we shall at once see, that its chief object and aim is not to speak of God in any other way except as declared by His Son, and so, specially, to set forth, honour, and magnify God the Father's work in and through Jesus Christ our Lord. Read the four verses which precede the text: "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will shew Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him." Now in all this the grand truth is enforced, which many persons seem altogether to forget, if they do not go even further still, and with prejudice oppose it. For there is afloat much of false spiritual liberalism, if we may so speak. And this truth is, that a man is not allowed to worship God or to try to serve Him just according to his own mode, or after his own conscience, as it is termed. Conscience is a word under cover of which very much dishonour is done to God, and very many souls lost. There is a darkened as well as an enlightened conscience. In one is ruin, in the other is salvation. With that testimony before him which the Bible contains—with that Gospel preached,

as it is by all faithful ministers in every Christian land, no man is excusable for trying to worship or to serve God in any other way than really and truly by and through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our one only but all-sufficient and all-glorious Mediator — i. e. one coming between God and us — through whom we have all remission of sin — through whom alone we can possibly be saved, and through whom alone we have any right even to address God in prayer, or to praise Him, or to do any works of an acceptable kind in His sight, or indeed to live at all before Him. There is much need of opposing error and delusion here, and of establishing the truth. It is a real, absolute fact, that there is only one admissible way for us to approach God, just as much as it is a fact that no one would be allowed to come into the immediate presence of our sovereign, except through that person — whether the minister, chamberlain, or noble, or whosoever it may be, having the right, permission, and authority to introduce or present at court. Even if this earthly rule could be broken by any means, the rule and purpose and will of God cannot be broken by any power in heaven or on earth, it being spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ: "No man cometh to the Father but by Me." Therefore the text declares that certain high and illustrious privileges, on which I shall presently speak, are not given merely to those who believe in the existence of a God as their Maker, or as a Lawgiver, or as a future Judge. No! But they are given only to him that believeth

in the "Father, who sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world." They are given only to him who, though imperfectly, of course, still acts truly in this faith, who in prayer, in praise, in public worship, and in private meditation, in his acts and deeds, and in all his life, lives as one brought nigh to God, offered to Him, and accepted by Him solely but yet fully through Jesus Christ, as the living way to God for all immunities from evil, and every enjoyment of good. May each one of us remember and apply these grand realities of religion personally to himself, as he values the honour of the Father, the honour of the Son, and his own safety, peace, and everlasting life!

We may now advance. We may now consider the first of those gifts and privileges granted to all of the character just described, viz. to all who hear the Saviour's words and believe in the Father who sent Him. Every such one "hath everlasting life." He has it now. God has bestowed it on him — has bestowed it freely. It is his now. It is begun in him, to be perfected, and to be eternal. Oh! what a glorious truth! Many persons very much enjoy the consideration that this gift of "everlasting life" was assured to all who shall be saved—to all the true children of God — in the mind and purpose of God from all eternity. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son [d]". . . . "and them He also called," visit-

[d] Rom. viii. 29.

ing them by the Holy Spirit during their day upon the earth, and making them new creatures, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works[e]." This is the history of every saved soul, without one exception. Nor does the text only say that he who believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have eternal life, as a gift to be given by and bye, or on any condition whatsoever except that of faith, as the means whereby it is appropriated: nor does it say that there is any doubt whether he will have it or not. No! But it states that he has it—has it even now. And this is not a strange interpretation—an high-flown enthusiastic view, but the plain and manifest assertion of the text; and it is the doctrine of God's Word continually, or rather, always. See the last verse of the third chapter of St. John: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Again, "He that hath the Son hath life." And this, practically speaking—speaking with an eye to the condition of our souls and to eternity—is a matter of the very utmost importance. We may die in an instant—by some nerve failing in the brain—by some pulse failing in the heart—by some accident, depriving us of life in a moment of time. We may not have one instant to ask for eternal life—far less to do any thing towards its attainment. But it belongs to us, as Christians now. We may feel ourselves so sinful, weak, and helpless, that, at this moment, we cannot persuade ourselves of being capable to do any thing

[e] Ephes. ii. 10.

towards everlasting life! Be it so! Still if we are Christ's, and Christ is ours, we have everlasting life, and no power can deprive us of the gift: for it is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord; and whether we may be in spiritual gloom or in spiritual sunshine—whether we may be in sorrow or in joy—whether we may live or whether we may die, this gift is ours for ever: and though man may resume what was considered a gift, either wrongly or rightly, yet God cannot and God will not do it, in the matter of eternal life: for all things are known to Him, and in His hand from the beginning to the end of every soul's history; and He fits and prepares for eternal life every one unto whom He gives it: and He brightens them as gems for the crown of Christ, He forms them as living stones in the temple of God, He trains them as His servants, who shall stand around His throne and serve Him day and night, and He brings them up as His own dear children to enjoy His love, even for ever and ever.

Jesus next declares of Him who heareth His word, and believeth on the Father who sent Him, "that he shall not come into condemnation." Our Saviour (we are told) came not into the world "to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Wrath and condemnation is abiding on all who are still unconverted. Nor can this burden pass away from any one, except at the foot of the cross, (as the story of the Pilgrim's Progress so scripturally

and beautifully tells,) except through faith in a crucified Redeemer. Nobody, however, to whom the Gospel is preached, is finally lost, because he is a sinner by nature and a sinner by his own personal transgression. If it were so, there would not be one saved soul in heaven out of all the human race. No, but every sinner, who sins to the end of his days, as the unconverted sinner does, and with the privileges of the Gospel around him, is finally lost, because he will not repent and believe the Gospel, and receive Jesus as his own Saviour and King—or in other words because of his unbelief. No other sin will finally shut any one out of heaven; for the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, and He has made atonement for every species of guilt; and no one man, woman or child, who, at any time or in any way, turns to Him as the sure refuge of sinners, will or can perish—will or can be condemned at the great judgment day. Jesus Himself gives the real reason for the destruction of body and soul in hell: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil[f]." But when divine grace leads any one to love and to seek that light, that living light, even Jesus Christ, and to follow Him, who is the "light of life"—then the sinner is freed from all condem-

[f] John iii. 18, 19.

nation in the sight of God; for the Scripture proclaims that there is "now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit[g]." Their transgressions shall never be brought up, no, nor even mentioned against them: for Jesus takes their sin upon Himself and bears it away, while He puts upon them His own perfect righteousness, in which there is no flaw or failing: and in that they stand forgiven, accepted, complete, and glorious for everlasting life. This is the heritage of all true believers in Christ. This is their condition for eternity. And it cannot be too good, too blessed, or too glorious, because it is all theirs, just and exclusively for Christ's matchless worth and through faith in His adorable name.

One more privilege—one more exemption or deliverance from evil—one more blessing remains, spoken of in our text, as granted and vouchsafed to each true believer in Christ. "He is passed from death unto life." He was in a state of death: for in "Adam all die[h]." He was dead in his own trespasses and sins. He was under sentence of everlasting woe away from the presence of God. But now all is changed. He has been led forth, by the Spirit's call, from that dark, that dismal region, wherein he once dwelt under the thraldom of Satan, the world, and the flesh; and he has been translated, or removed, into the kingdom of God's own dear Son, where all is light, and peace, and joy, and hope, and

[g] Rom. viii. 1. [h] 1 Cor. xv. 22.

anticipation of eternal bliss. And though there may be and, in all probability, though there will be times, when his spirit may seem dull and dead; and when no brightness illuminates his path; and when doubts and fears and misgivings may for a season arise, still there will be as much difference between him in his old and in his new estate, as between death and life. For he will have passed from "death into life"—and this life is an inextinguishable thing—a thing for all eternity. Let us, therefore, oh! let us rise up to a livelier sense of our true blessedness as believers in Christ! Without Him no one can place his condition here, or his destination in the world to come, too low or hopelessly: but with Him as ours, no one can place his condition too happily or too high. Let the careless and ungodly lay this to heart to rouse and awaken them! Let the servants of Christ lay this to heart to cheer, comfort and gladden them! For eternity alone shall fully tell the misery of all who reject or neglect the Saviour: and that eternity alone shall fully tell the blessedness and glory of all who welcome and receive Jesus Christ during their life on the earth.

I would now say, in conclusion, Oh! that no one might any longer remain without that heavenly light in the mind and that heavenly warmth in the heart, which the due consideration of these truths ought most certainly to bring. Well I know that nothing but the Spirit can give or maintain either the light of spiritual apprehen-

sion or the warmth of spiritual love, zeal, and gladness. For it is written, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." But I do not speak thus without remembering too that the Spirit ever blesses and accompanies the word preached—that He is promised by God Almighty unto all who ask for Him. If we were asked for bread by our hungry child, should we refuse it, had we bread to give? No, assuredly not! And God has promised that we should be more likely to do an act, so unnatural as this, than He to refuse the Spirit unto any true or faithful petitioner in Christ's name. God therefore grant us the abundance of the Spirit—heal us of all deadness, coldness and indifference, as to our salvation through Jesus Christ—and deepen and extend the interest of all, whose interest in this matter is already alive and awake! Our body may grievously ail, and we go to a physician, and he may be a right skilful man: but no physician on earth can at once put an end to all the diseases in a diseased frame. But happily it is not so in eternal and spiritual things! Happily it is not so with regard to our everlasting soul. Whoever is brought by the Spirit to Christ is sure to be healed of all his spiritual sicknesses, and the inner man is made anew, like the flesh of a little child. And again, we may be in health and vigour, and have no pain and no infirmity in our body now, but this cannot last for ever. It cannot last for many years, and it may be interrupted at any moment.

But it is not so with the soul. If Jesus has healed us, and made us "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," as is the real state of every true believer in the whole world, then this health and strength shall be eternal. And if, as the poor instrument in the hand of Almighty God, I should be enabled now to bring any fellow-creature to a more full, free, and lively sense of the blessedness which is his through Jesus Christ, or to waken any to a sense and appreciation of it for the first time, great indeed will be my privilege: and, more than this, there shall assuredly be joy above; for angels rejoice, as our Lord declares, over "one sinner that repenteth;" and "unto the principalities of heaven is made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God[i]."

[i] Ephes. iii. 10.

SERMON X.

STRENGTH FOR INFIRMITY.

LUKE XIII. 11—13.

And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

THIS is one of that multitude of miracles performed upon earth by our Lord Jesus Christ. In speaking upon it, I shall point attention to two distinctive subjects:

The first is, the state of the woman on whom the miracle was done.

The second is, the speed and completeness of her cure.

And lastly, I shall make that spiritual application of the narrative which, beyond doubt, every miracle claims, in addition to its reception as a real fact.

The state of the woman suggests much and

important truth as to the nature of very many miracles which Jesus performed. Three things are told about her condition. She had been a sufferer for eighteen years. She was reduced to a posture of extreme deformity. And by no possible means could she raise herself up, or walk like others. Now why are these things so expressly told? Just for the same reason that, elsewhere, it is written how a sufferer, whom Jesus healed in an instant, had been sick for no less than twelve years—and that the man at the pool of Bethesda had been a cripple thirty-eight years. All this is written, in condescension to us, to perfect the evidence, and to strengthen our faith in the miracles of Jesus Christ by such demonstration.

The second subject was—the speed and completeness of the woman's cure. "When Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands upon her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God."

Here we may observe, that there was no call—no cry—no petition for a cure made by the woman herself, nor by others for her. It was not so with the lepers. They cried for relief, and it was granted. It was not so with the blind men. They too cried; and many others cried to Jesus, and were healed. But of this woman we only know that she was "in the synagogue." She was, however, in the fit place for reception of a blessing. She was "in the way." And she was blessed.

God is not limited in the mode of His works. Some cry—are heard and healed. Some meet their conversion, like Paul, without any cry of prayer—indeed when absolutely proving and shewing forth their bitter enmity to God and His people. Some are healed when in the way. Some when out of the way. God giveth no account of His matters. Much might be said, spiritually, on these topics. Much might be said on God's sovereign mercy unto souls, as represented thus in Christ's acts and cures. But I must proceed to follow that course in which the text leads us. Jesus saw this poor suffering woman—I should suppose one who had suffered far more than any common infirmity of the body inflicts. Why? Because Jesus Himself gives a very awful character to that special visitation under which she groaned. See the sixteenth verse. She was a "daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years!"—Satan, her cruel foe, and ours also. But Jesus saw her; and He called her, purposing to shew His supreme power over the adversary's work, grievous and long as it had been. Jesus saw and called her. One sentence came from His lips. He laid His hands on her. And now the infirmity of eighteen long years was gone—all gone—in a moment of time. Her frame rose erect. She was loosed from the bonds, more tenacious than iron and brass, with which Satan so long held her. And with happy and restored frame, with joyful and believing heart, she at once gave the honour and

the glory where they were due. She felt and experienced that the cure accomplished for her was from the Almighty Himself: and "she glorified God."

Such was the bodily cure which Jesus performed. But the history is written for our learning and application. Let us, therefore, receive all due instruction from it! Let us remember, that, while this narrative, as to the body, could apply but to very few, (perhaps only to one, in all its details;) on the other hand, the spiritual application must apply, more or less, unto all whom the Lord Jesus Christ sets free from the bondage of Satan, whom He heals of their souls' infirmities, and raises up for the service of their God!

We have all been bowed down, disabled, and reduced to an utter incapacity of lifting ourselves up, for a time, far, far longer, in its duration, than eighteen years. All this truth is assuredly contained in that one declaration of the Scripture—"in Adam all die[a]." Our complete spiritual misery—our complete helplessness began with him—yes, began in him, when he fell from original righteousness—when he disobeyed his Maker, and forfeited all blessings, both for himself and for us, of whom he stood as the representative, though unto sin and death. When Adam sinned, all his coming race would have had, if alive, to raise the lamentation, "The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint! for

[a] 1 Cor. xv. 22.

these things our eyes are dim[b]." No truth in the Bible is more certain. Every page either tells it, as a real fact, or implies it, by another fact, namely, the recovery and restoration of all, who "in Christ are made alive"—who stand in Him, as their representative unto salvation and life. Unto every one of them the promise is fulfilled, "I will bring them health and cure; and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth[c]."

But not only does every page of God's Word either tell or imply our fall into sin, degradation, and helplessness, when Adam fell. It is a matter of revelation certainly, but not of revelation only. Of this there is another and a signal proof. Every human creature, born into this present world, is a living witness, telling and declaring, in his own person, heart, conversation, and life, exactly the same truth. During the sinful and disastrous course of man's whole history, as yet fulfilled, there never, never has appeared that unknown prodigy—namely, a mere human child born into this world righteous, holy, and good. There never has appeared one born strong to serve God, born without a spirit of infirmity, and able, if unchanged and unrenewed, to do otherwise than grovel upon earth, bowed down to it, incapable to lift himself up to heaven, to glory, and to God. Therefore we may well repeat that our state of sin and decrepitude—yes, that of every soul—is far more ancient than

[b] Lament. v. 16, 17. [c] Jer. xxxiii. 6.

eighteen years ago: for it is, in time, commensurate with Adam's fall. And thus, thus we may clearly see how this woman's state, as to the duration of her evil case, represents ours too, only most imperfectly.

Again, the spiritual parallel holds good as to the speed and completeness of her cure.

We too are healed very speedily. We are restored, as it were, in a moment of time. A word from God does the work for us. Ancient indeed was the plan of salvation. Ancient indeed was the purpose of God to save fallen sinners through a Saviour's blood, through a Saviour's merits, through a Saviour's righteousness. That was older than the world itself. Jesus is the "Lamb slain," in the love, mercy, and sovereign purpose of God, "from the foundation of the world[d]." And when Jesus was born of a woman upon earth; and when He came, in the hour of His humiliation, to suffer on our account, long and lonesome, dreary and painful, to Him, beyond tongue to tell, was that which He endured, so that sinners such as we are might be saved. Nevertheless, that work of His—that blessed work—being once done, achieved, and completed —"finished," as His own expression on the cross was—the medicine for all our sins and woes is ready and made up in unfailing plenteousness. There it is, all at hand for us—all prepared! If we drink it—if we take the "cup of salvation," then health and strength instantaneously per-

[d] Rev. xiii. 8.

vade all our spiritual frame, though perhaps we know it not all at once. When Jesus finished His work, He left nothing like the visible magician's wand, of which fable tells. Nay, more! He left no special sanctity or power to work miracles in bits or relics of the cross, even could we be sure that they bodily touched us; but we know what He did leave upon the earth to make the lame walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, to raise the dead from their death in trespasses and sins, and to break Satan's chains, all snapped asunder, as if they were but flax or tow. We know what He did leave.— He left His Gospel. That was His legacy. That was His gift to and for mankind. And whensoever any one on earth receives that Gospel—whether man, or woman, or child—whether rich or poor—whether young or whether old—whether learned or whether ignorant—whatsoever may have been the former condition, sin, and helplessness of that soul, then, for once and for ever, the cure is effected. The leprosy is gone, as a matter of judgment with God—as a matter of exile and of separation from His people. God pronounces that clean which had been unclean. The inner man is renewed, born again, "created again in Christ Jesus unto good works[e]." And there is joy in heaven over a new sinner saved—over a new child brought into God's everlasting and adopted family. But this acceptance is not all which, in its speed and in its completeness, makes the wo-

[e] Ephes. ii. 10.

man's case a parallel with ours if we are saved at all. For, from the very moment that any one is born again, in the true and high sense of the word—or, you may say, from the moment that any one repents, or is converted, or call the great change of heart by any other name, (the name matters little for our grand subject now,) that person is sanctified and set apart for the service and glory of God, made one of His own, to believe in Him, love, serve, and obey Him. He walks in "newness of life." The old man is crucified with Christ, that the "body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth he should not serve sin." Sin no more reigns in the mortal body, that it should be obeyed, in serving divers pleasures and lusts. And they who in time past yielded themselves to that tyrant, sin, and bowed down themselves to it, as their master, do so no longer. They now "yield their members servants unto righteousness:" and, instead of bearing no fruit unto God, they bear "fruit unto holiness," and, "have as the end, everlasting life[f]." Or, to take an illustration from the miracle itself. They are raised up, by God's power and grace, so as no more to grovel in sin and vanity. They walk with an eye and gaze directed upward unto heavenly things; and in their thoughts, their words, and their deeds, they glorify God, and thus fulfil that which ought to be the grand purpose, aim, and destination of every reasonable man, woman, or child in the whole world—namely, the glory of God.

[f] Rom. vi. 22.

It seems to me, that, in conclusion, we may not be ill employed in imagining to ourselves the subsequent state of the woman who was thus healed, and in applying it to our own spiritual state, after God has healed us in our soul. The touch of Jesus made her straight and well—made her to move and walk, from that time, as we may suppose, like all others in full bodily strength. So the Spirit of God makes every converted soul live and walk like the other children of God. They are all pursuing one path. They all are seen in one attitude. They all are treading in the steps of their one Leader and Lord. We are not to suppose that the healed and restored woman never knew again what weakness of limb meant—never knew again what it was to be weary—never again had any of the pains to which human nature is liable. To suppose this would be a vain and a mistaken thing. Nevertheless the completeness of the blessing in her restoration remained. Nevertheless, instead of the pitiable object which she had been for the long eighteen years, she was a living proof of Christ's miraculous work, done in the synagogue, on one memorable day. Nevertheless, she was one who was fully cured of her terrible affliction. Nevertheless, she was delivered from Satan's bonds; and not one link or fragment of his former chain held her any longer. She went forth in her daily walk with head erect, and with each limb fulfilling its office in comfort, freedom, and strength. But, as I suggested before, she

would still be liable, at times, to weariness and ailment and pain, like all others, while in the body here. And is it not so with all saved souls, while they remain on the earth, and until the very end of their pilgrimage? In every one of them Jesus has done, by the Spirit, His own work. And that work is no less divine than a miracle itself. The Son has made them "free from the law of sin and death." They are walking with enlightened eyes, and looking upwards unto eternal things. They are glorifying God. Their habitual course is not earthly but heavenly. Nevertheless, speaking of course spiritually, they are not exempt from their times of weariness. They are not exempt from their times of "heaviness through manifold temptations." They have to partake in the same sorrows which others of God's children bear. The time is not yet come (though it shall come) when it shall be otherwise, when they shall surely walk, as saints glorified, in all the perfection, in all the serenity, in all the triumph of their future reign. God's tried yet enlightened children, will, I doubt not, feel the joy and the confidence, which should always attend such remembrances. Let them remember what God has Himself guaranteed to every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ—pardon, peace, grace, strength, final victory, and eternal glory! Let them remember what He has not guaranteed —namely, exemption from weakness, and suffering, and spiritual infirmities, and inward contentions of all kind, so complicated and so manifold

that tongue cannot tell them! Let them remember and apply all this, as their need may be! Let them rejoice evermore, and again I say, rejoice in that which He has guaranteed—in that which He has already done for them and is doing now: and when they encounter and feel those trials and temptations which every Christian meets, more or less, in his path heavenwards, let them count it no "strange thing[g];" and never, never let them regard them as being links of Satan's fetters holding them still as his own! Let them beware of this for their own peace! Let them rather regard them as the glorious links of that better chain, let down for them from God in heaven to bind them safely to Himself, to Jesus His dear Son in heaven, to His true people here, and to His church triumphant in heaven! Of which chain they surely would not wish one link broken! In this remembrance let them meet and welcome each cross lying in their path! Let them take it up, as Jesus bade them, and bear it willingly! And let it be to them a fresh token and sign of their future crown! Jesus, in His wisdom, tenderness, and love, continually told His own disciples, and, through them, in the same spirit and in the same attributes, He tells us too, how these things should be their lot and our lot, lest they or we should be offended. And to doubt our health and our cure and our restoration to the family of God, because we may have to go through weariness, and trial, and suffering,

[g] 1 Peter iv. 12.

and contest, as may please God, would be like the strong man, who has laboured hard in the field, doubting the capacity and the strength of his limbs, because for a while fatigued: or it would be like some soldier doubting his enlistment and forgetting his commander because the strife, for a moment, was hard to bear: or it would be for one of us to doubt the health and soundness of our flesh, because some cut or accident gave us a temporary smart or a transient pain. Therefore let us not fail to enjoy, in the strength of God, our full salvation and restoration by Christ! Let us not doubt of it, because we may meet and experience much, very much to remind us, day by day, of our remaining and continued liability to trial, infirmity, and sin! And let us look forward to the day when all such things shall have passed away for ever—of which glad day our present favoured state is the sure earnest and pledge, given unto us in the lovingkindness and mercy of our God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XI.

OUR LIFE IN CHRIST'S DEATH.

JOHN XI. 47—54.

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples.

THAT glorious miracle in which the Lord Jesus

Christ shewed His power as God, not only over death on the bed, and over death on the bier, but even over corruption in the grave itself—I mean, of course, the raising of Lazarus after he had been dead four days—appears in the Gospel history as having a very distinct and important place in those circumstances which led to our Lord's capture and crucifixion. And all this, no doubt, shadows forth the same truth so constantly presented to us in the Scriptures—I mean, that our everlasting life is inseparably connected with His death—that our resurrection from sin and eternal death is through His humiliation unto the death on the cross. Let me therefore mention the aim and the plan of my present sermon. I shall, first, shew how closely the fact and miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus was followed by a wicked combination of His enemies, and how it led to that combination, according to the Gospel narrative. I shall, secondly, dwell on the exceeding wickedness of man, as exhibited in this portion of our Lord and Saviour's history. I shall, thirdly, speak of God's overruling power and mercy, which defeated the iniquitous counsel of Satan and of evil men, and brought out redemption, the most gracious work of God, from the crucifixion of Jesus, the most base and wicked deed ever committed by man. And, lastly, I shall shew the mighty claim on us for all thankfulness and joy, in that God has fulfilled for us, in a most blessed sense, that which was spoken in a most accursed sense; and how it has

proved expedient for His glory and for our salvation, that one man — even the Lord Jesus Christ — should suffer and should die for Jew and for Gentile — "not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." May God grant us His Holy Spirit, opening our understandings and our hearts, that we may attend to the things which are spoken in His Word, and spiritually prize and discern the truth of God, on a subject so connected with our Lord Jesus Christ, with His kingdom and our eternal souls!

The passage before us commences with the word "then," and refers us back to the contents of the whole chapter up to the place where our text begins. For one subject only is contained therein, viz: the resurrection of Lazarus. It is needless now to dwell upon that subject. But I would only observe that when Jesus had said, "Lazarus, come forth;" and when "he that was dead came forth" from the dark sepulchral cave, then, at this most exciting and grand miracle, "many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him." Observe that! And Bethany, the place where this miracle was wrought, was not, like Galilee, a distant province of Judæa, but it was close to Jerusalem, only two miles from the city, so that, what with the character of this miracle in being such a signal triumph over death, what with the place where it was performed, and what with its effect, under God's blessing, in adding

many new converts to Jesus and His doctrine, the utmost public sensation, and the most important consequences were likely to ensue from it. But Jesus had spies ever watching His proceedings — sometimes specially sent to entangle Him in His talk, at other times lying in wait to catch something out of His mouth, for which they might accuse Him, and marking each opportunity which they could employ against Him. The miracle just accomplished and its immediate result in increasing the number of believers in Christ, was, as these His adversaries well knew, of too much importance not to be referred to the head quarters of His enemies. Some present therefore acted, as spies would act in case of some exploit and distinguished success on the part of those whose progress they were set to watch. "Some of them" (as we hear) "went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council." And thus was fulfilled the prophetic language of the Psalm, "The council of the wicked laid siege against me[a]."

Now what was the object of this council? Undoubtedly it was to stop the progress and extension of Christ's doctrine, and to defeat His influence upon the nation at large. The ecclesiastical rulers of the Jews—called Scribes, (or expounders of the Sacred Law,) the chief priests, and the busy, arrogant, hypocritical sect of the

[a] Psalm xxii. 16.

Pharisees—were, at this time, generally speaking, in a most wicked state, as a dead carcase rather than a living body and assemblage of true religious men. They were full of pride, hypocrisy, bigotry, spiritual tyranny, and total disregard of all plain morality in the fulfilment of their ends. (I say, generally speaking, and referring to the very great majority, although some, like Nicodemus, were very different.) Now these rulers hated and opposed Jesus for many and for various reasons — partly, because He was constantly exposing and denouncing their sin—partly, because their pride and their jealousy could not brook the diminution of their influence with its transfer to another; and for many other reasons, into which I cannot enter now. It is sufficient to state that jealousy of Christ was the leading motive for the gathering together of that council, which we see now assembled, on the news concerning Lazarus and the effect of this miracle reaching their watchful ears.

Their business was thus opened—"What do we? For this man doeth many miracles." They knew full well that they had no power to accomplish such works; and, instead of admitting at once the claims of Jesus, as the Messiah — instead of believing on Him, and, in the spirit of John the Baptist, being willing to decrease that He might increase — instead of joining in the shout of acclamation, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest"— instead of

welcoming Him, who came unto His own, as their Lord and Saviour, they opposed Him with all their might, virulence, and jealousy, as proud men who would not be dethroned from that seat of authority which they had usurped, and grievously abused so long.

This was the grand, leading cause of all that animosity which, humanly speaking, led to our Lord's unjust condemnation and death. But at this council, on which our attention is now fixed, another reason is prominently brought forward, as causing alarm to the Pharisees and chief priests. They said, "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." Now we know that at this time the country of Judæa was subject to the Romans: and although the Romans had permitted the Jews to have a king of their own, (namely Herod,) and their own religious establishment, still all was subject to the Roman governor of the province—circumstances which we ought clearly to understand, as specially connected with our Lord's trial, accusation, mode of death, and many other events connected with His life and history.. It is not impossible that, in the judicial blindness and darkness of their hearts, these enemies of Jesus really did believe that He was then coming to "make Himself a King." At all events they brought this accusation against Him in the presence of Pilate, who would not have listened to any thing of a religious character

as a ground for his interference[b]. But it is far more likely that they did not believe what they said as to Christ claiming Cæsar's place, and that any such assertion was merely a cloke and pretence of patriotism, while their own interest was, in fact, the one only motive of their outcry against Jesus. And well may we conceive the cunning plausibility with which this saying was put forth, and the look of indignant though hypocritical alarm with which it was received by the assembly at large; "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

One of them however — he too the high priest Caiaphas — one of the highest ecclesiastical rank in the land, filling the place which Aaron once held, and, so far as his office went, being the type and sign of Christ Jesus Himself, our High Priest, who "ever liveth to make intercession for us"—one more bold and iniquitous than the rest now suddenly and treacherously comes forward, smooths all difficulties with Satanic ease, and cuts the knot which others could not unravel. An opponent seems in the way of his own and his companions' interest. He daringly proposes a systematic murder, as obviating all the difficulty of the case. He clothes the proposal, like an arch-hypocrite, in the language of concern for the nation at large. Caiaphas speaks: "Ye know

[b] See Luke xxiii. 2. and end of previous chapter from the 66th verse.

nothing at all"—(that is, You do not see what course to pursue in this matter! You are fools to hesitate, or let scruples or conscience interfere in a case so evident as this! Let me at once solve the whole difficulty which you are now in! Do not trouble yourselves with principles of justice or morality, or any impediments like these)—"Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

Wonderful words these, when taken with the note and comment of the Holy Ghost, through the inspired evangelist, St. John! I cannot recall any passage in all Scripture exactly of the same character. We find Balaam desirous to curse Israel, but compelled to bless that very people, and even to prophesy of Christ, as the Star out of Jacob, as the sceptre-bearing King. We find again the Jews saying of our Lord, "His blood be on us, and on our children"—a phrase which no doubt many Jews, on their conversion to Jesus Christ, have adapted and applied in another and most blessed sense, and which we may well adapt and apply, not in judgment, but in mercy, as to the blood of Jesus poured and abiding on poor guilty men for their redemption, and for cleansing the Jew, as well as the Gentile, from sin! But here, in the passage before us, the word itself and the Spirit of God gives another and a most blessed meaning to words, uttered by the speaker in a very different sense, so far as his

own purpose and feeling was concerned. What did Caiaphas mean by his saying? Why, putting aside all considerations of justice, all fear of God, and all moral propriety whatever, he meant that it was profitable, advantageous, desirable, expedient that one man should die, whether rightly or wrongly, rather than that the whole nation of the Jews should be subject to the danger, which he assumed as probable. We know the meaning and intention of these words, and this declaration was his own. Nevertheless, while he was guilty of the wickedness which this thought exhibited and this proposal conveyed, still he spake not of himself. The words were not, by any means, his own. No sooner is the saying finished than the Scripture proceeds; "And this spake he not of himself." Though he uttered that which was, in reality, a true prophecy of deep spiritual meaning, still it was accomplished in a way of which he had no conception whatsoever. He was plotting and proposing a crime no less than that of murder, though hypocritically covered with the cloke of expediency. But God — who makes and directs the organs of man's speech — God caused him so to express himself, as to proclaim, in the very plainest terms (when rightly understood) the gospel of eternal life and salvation through the death of Christ. It is written, "And this spake he not of himself, but being high priest that year"— being thus high in station and authority—having the weight and claim

of such an high office attached to his words — "being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

The counsel of Caiaphas was at once and readily received. The very next verse proceeds: "Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death." And no amount or increase of guilt seemed too much for them. We find from the twelfth chapter, tenth and eleventh verses, how "they consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." They bribed Judas to "betray innocent blood." They suborned false witnesses against our Lord and Saviour. Their malice could not be satisfied except by His death —and that after the Roman manner—I mean, the agonizing death of the cross. They falsely accused Him to Pilate, and acted on the fears of that timeserving, irresolute man; "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." They persecuted Jesus unto death, and followed Him with treachery—even beyond the confines of the grave—giving "large money" to the soldiers, who watched the sepulchre, and bribing them to say of Him who had risen from the dead, "His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept." Such was man's wickedness,

wherein all classes had a share — the rulers and the populace — the Jews and the heathens[c] — representing at large the whole family of man. For we should not so much think of those particular voices which accused the Saviour, crying out, "Crucify Him," or of those particular hands which smote Him, and scourged Him, and nailed His blessed body to the cross, as of our own sins, and of the sins done in the world, which in reality cried out aloud for his gracious death, and which in reality brought Him from heaven and glory to Gethsemane and Calvary. Such was man's wickedness. According to the language of St. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, Jesus was "taken, and by wicked hands was crucified and slain." And soon again Peter charges the Jews of their sin against the Lord Jesus, "whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life[d]" Such was man's wickedness. Thus the purpose and proposal of Caiaphas was permitted to be carried out. I say was permitted; for as we have considered the wickedness of man, in fulfilling the intent of Caiaphas, so we must now consider the goodness of God, in fulfilling that other meaning, given to the words of Caiaphas by the comment of the Holy Ghost — yea, furthermore, in causing those words, which he spake not of himself, to be a glorious prophecy of

[c] See Acts iv. 24—29. [d] Acts iii. 15.

Christ's sufferings and death for us, that whether Jews or Gentiles, we might be saved, and be gathered together into one fold, under one good Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us then mark well the goodness and mercy of God in overruling man's sin for man's everlasting benefit! A saying of Joseph[e] may very much help us in illustration of this wonderful truth. His brethren had cruelly ill-treated him—no doubt in a manner to deserve due punishment from him, should he ever be called to inflict it. But it was appointed by God that, through their wicked act, he was to be exalted, become ruler over all Egypt, and become to his father and his whole family a deliverer from urgent want, and their most signal benefactor in the very land whither he had been brought by the jealousy, cruelty, and sin of his brethren. The time came at last when, on their father's death, they trembled before him, and expected the consequences merited so well by their own wickedness. But hear Joseph's language; and in it hear the Gospel! A greater than Joseph is here. A greater than Joseph speaks: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive[f]." How exactly this corresponds with the language of our text, and with the thoughts suggested by it to all who are taught by the Holy Ghost, and able to appreciate the good-

[e] Joseph, it must be remembered, is a constant living type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[f] Genesis l. 20.

ness and love of God, as shewn in the Gospel of Christ! How it shews God's sovereign grace reigning unto righteousness for man, where sin had reigned, even to the death of the Lord of glory! I quoted just now two passages, uttered shortly after Christ's death, on the wickedness of man in committing this act—but while in one[g] man's wicked deed receives its due condemnation, the goodness also and mercy of God towards us receives its acknowledgment too. For Jesus is spoken of as "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." And again, in the other passage[h], where I spoke of Peter charging the Jews with having killed the "Prince of life," immediately after he adds, glorifying God's purpose of redemption for man through His dear Son—"those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, He hath so fulfilled." And what was it which God had shewed by the voice of His prophets? What was it which God fulfilled on Christ's coming in the flesh unto this earth? Why, surely as the centre, as the sum, and as the substance of Divine mercy and love to poor guilty men—that Jesus should die not only for the nation of the Jews, but that he should gather together into one fold and flock, into the one mansion and family of heaven, the whole nation of the saved—the multitude of the blessed—all true believers in Him throughout the whole world.

[g] Acts ii. 23. [h] Acts iii. 14.

Let me say, in conclusion, these are no mere speculative questions—no mere doctrines of theology, which are for some only to receive and to prize, but which others may pass by and disregard. Far, far otherwise! We cannot sink too low in humiliation at the fact (proclaimed to the universe and all its inhabitants by the death of Jesus) that without the shedding of His blood there could be no remission of our sin. Neither can we rise too high in our exultation, triumph, and joy, that God has given us His Son—not spared His only Son, that He might make a full free, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Therefore let the conviction of our minds—therefore let the feeling of our hearts ever correspond with the conviction and feeling of St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world[1];" and in that we may glory without limit and without stint. Yes! and in that alone. We may glory too much in creation, if we disregard the marks of man's fall, which it clearly shews; but we cannot glory too much in redemption. We may have our thoughts too much occupied and too much drawn aside by many objects and pursuits, innocent in themselves, and only wrong when unduly occupying us; but we cannot have our thoughts too much occupied with the subject of our redemption through Jesus Christ. Therefore let us ever give

[1] Galatians vi. 14.

our minds to it. And not only this, but let us ever give our hearts to the subject of Christ crucified. As such I now would preach Him. I would preach on His Person, on Himself, not merely on the doctrine therewith connected. It is that we may love Him—love Him, who so loved us. We may love other things and other persons too much, but we cannot love Christ too much. Yea, even God the Father Himself will not accept our love, except it is founded on our love to Christ—except we love God through His own dear Son. I say, we may love other persons and other things too much—we may idolize them—and many there be in whose affections Christ takes no place at all. But be it not so with us! He is entitled to the highest place—and once enthroned there, He will give a tenfold happier tone to every other affection, and to every other tie. And finally, let us see that our practice and our life is made, in all its parts, conformable to that truth as it is in Jesus, which our understanding apprehends, and which our heart feels. Let us live to His glory, and to please Him, in our inward spirit and in our outward life. Let us serve Him at home and serve Him abroad—at holy seasons, and in the hourly business of our homes! Let us ask God to give us more and more of His abiding Spirit, just for the purpose that we may more and more glorify the Saviour! Let us ask Him to give and maintain in us true living faith, fervent love, and practical devotion to our Lord in all things! And I well may mention one more grace, without

which a man, even in the common relationships of life, must be base and contemptible, no less than wicked. Let us ask Him to give and maintain in us all gratitude to Jesus, that, in this spirit, we may praise God "not only with our lips, but in our lives;" and thus gladly declare and confess before heaven and before man, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen[k]."

[k] Rev. i. 5, 6.

SERMON XII.

DAILY PURIFICATION.

JOHN XIII. 10.

Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

THE more we mark and trace out the acts of our Lord Jesus Christ, the more each one of them appears in harmony with all the rest, and in the most perfect consistency with the whole character of His ministry. The grand feature of that ministry was this:—humiliation—that of humbling Himself in all things—coming "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"—coming to be among His people "as one that serveth." The history leading to our text illustrates this clearly: "When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And now He does a certain act, in close agreement with the whole tenor of His words and ministry, but addi-

tional thereto, as a fresh and most lively testimony to the nature of His office and work in our behalf. And by this act, to which I refer, He shews forth the grand mystery of His dying love, with its benefits to our everlasting souls. "He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments"—i. e. the outward flowing robe—"and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." Surprised, no doubt, as all the disciples were, they seem, in silence, to have borne His condescension. And they were right in so bearing it. It was not for them to remonstrate. For He, their Master and Lord, knew much better than they what was for His own glory and for their own good. The highest in dignity can stoop the lowest without tarnishing that dignity in the smallest degree. But when it came to the turn of Peter, he, with his usual eagerness of spirit and alacrity of speech, said unto Jesus, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me"—conveying the truth that no one can be saved, or have any share in Jesus Christ and His great salvation, unless washed from his sins in the Saviour's blood. On this "Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." He fell once more, through

his impetuosity, into error and irreverence, and called on the Lord Jesus to do more than was good in His sight, just as, before, he had called on Him to do less. But let us briefly pass by Peter's conduct, and look at the text itself, which we have now reached: "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

Here we must attend to three things—first, to the exact meaning of the sentence as it stands—secondly, to its application doctrinally—thirdly, to its application, practically, and concerning oruselves now. May these considerations be of much profit to us, through the hearing ear and the understanding spirit given by the Holy Ghost!

The sentence itself, as it stands, is merely a statement drawn from a certain fact, very familiar to those persons among whom it was thus spoken. The ancients made the most constant use of the bath; and in all large towns there were great public baths of the most complicated form and capacious size for the general body of the citizens to use at a small expense. Many ruins of these baths remain. I have seen some of them. Besides this, many plans or designs of them are to be found in books, and the whole system, therein adopted, is quite familiar to the students of antiquity. Now among other things known to us regarding them, it is ascertained, that long passages led from the bath itself to those apartments where the bathers were finally

dried, and sent forth in all cleanliness and purity from head to foot. Which fact explains that one might be perfectly, accurately and completely washed as to his whole body, and as to all things essential to his being clean, and yet, after passing through the long passages, might need once more to have his feet washed from any soiling, dust, or impurity contracted on his way. Thus simple is the explanation of the words which Jesus employed. He was ever accustomed to use the very commonest, best known, and homeliest things for His comparisons. Thus it was He uttered that sentence of the text: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." And let me just add here that the word *whit* means a point[a] or jot, though seldom used now: and "clean every whit[b]" means clean in every point. Such is the explanation of these words which I undertook to give.

We are next summoned to observe the doctrinal truth contained in them. And it is one of the very utmost consequence — one which declares the very redemption of our souls.

"He that is washed" then signifies one, who, by the Spirit, has been led to Jesus Christ, that his sins might be washed away in the Saviour's blood, representing His life given for our life.

[a] Johnson's Dictionary.

[b] The word νιπτεῖν, used for feet, is different from λούειν, the first word, though rendered the same. Νιπτεῖν refers especially to hands and feet. See Scott and Liddell.

"Wash me," saith David, "and I shall be whiter than snow." "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin," saith St. John. Again, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood . . . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." And all Scripture informs us, in every possible way, that without the shedding of the blood of Jesus there could have been "no remission of sin;" but, on the other hand, it informs us too, with no less certainty, that that blood having been once shed at Calvary, whosoever, at any time and in any way, comes to this fountain in faith shall thereby alone, but thereby altogether, be purified and cleansed every whit, completely and for ever.

There is a fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plung'd beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

Slow and dull, and even incapable, is man, of himself, to feel his need of this cleansing blood or to comprehend its efficacy. To many it is no more precious than if it had never been shed. Their religion is one in which it bears no part except one of mere words — except one just merely nominal, just merely formal, just a mere thing of sound, just the mere letter without any power in it, or life, or reality and truth. They (I repeat) feel not the need and necessity of being thus washed. They comprehend not the spiritual beauty, glory and excellency, which, in God's sight, appertains to those who are washed

in the blood of His own beloved Son. But leaving these, I pass on to others; and I ask, are not there many who have tasted, in a measure, the "powers of the world to come," and who are, we may trust, the true children of God — yet, at the same time, are sadly backward and slow to enjoy the blessings and to live in the privileges resting upon all who are thus purified? They know their own original guilt. They know their own infirmities. They know their own special transgressions against the law of God; and that too in a way which no other individual on earth can be acquainted with. All this is well. And it is well that committed sin should much distress us—even far more than it usually does. But it is not well when any such convictions or any such remembrances interfere, even for a moment, with the full assurance of our faith that no spot of guilt remains on the believer's soul for condemnation or wrath from God. It is not well when any such conscience of sin puts aside for a moment the sense of our relationship to God, as justified in His sight, as those whose unrighteousness "is forgiven and whose sin is covered." To be doubtful and disturbed on this point may, perhaps, bear the aspect of humility. But, in truth, it is not humility. It is want of faith. It is want of a full entrance into the work of Jesus on the cross, into the exceeding value of His cleansing blood. The whole world is divided into two classes—those who are not washed in the Saviour's blood,

and those who are. It is either one thing or the other with us all. None are partially cleansed. We are, at this moment, either unwashed of any single sin and transgression, and with it all upon us for condemnation—or we are, at this moment, in the sight of God, clad in raiment white, pure, and glistening in its brilliancy, unspotted and undefiled, through Jesus' blood, and of that number, who, having been thus washed, "are clean every whit," as Jesus Himself said.

But thus far we have only considered a part of the doctrinal truth which this saying of Jesus contains. It also teaches us, that, while His own blood cleanseth us from all sin and renders the believer at any time of the day or night acceptable in God's sight, still there is a certain act, which the believer in Jesus should ever and attentively fulfil during his course and pilgrimage on the earth. We all know very well how that course or pilgrimage is ever called a "walk"—or a "race," and thus likened to that which is accomplished by our feet, as members of the human frame. "Order my paths in Thy goings," saith the saint of God, "and let my footsteps slip not." Moreover, as a promise to us, it is said of God: "He will keep the feet of His saints." Now, as we walk on this earth, (and this would be specially the case with the sandalled foot in the dusty climes of the east, where our Lord spake,) dust or dirt must more or less gather round the feet, howsoever accurate the whole cleanliness of any one's person may be. And this gathering of

dust or dirt requires fit attention, when the walk is done, for any one desiring to be perfectly clean. Thus our Lord tells us, that "he who is washed needeth not save to wash his feet;" and by this we are taught, in symbol and type, that which all Scripture and all experience of divine grace teaches too — namely, that in our spiritual walk, as Christians, each day and hour, we too continually gather the defilement of sin, and each day and hour we need to come, in faith, to the life-blood of Jesus, that it may wash away these daily, these hourly stains. In the ungodly sin "reigns unto death." In the believer grace "reigns unto life." The ungodly live yielding their members as instruments of sin to the devil, the world, and the flesh. But the believer lives yielding his members as instruments of righteousness to God. Nevertheless, sin is in all that he thinks, says and does. In our best prayers sin is mingled. In our best praises sin is mingled. In our holiest actions sin is mingled: and no saint on earth, no, not a Joseph, a Daniel, or a Job, ever thought, said, or did any thing whatever, which, in itself, was sinless and unspotted, which, in itself, did not need to be washed in the Saviour's blood, in order to prove an acceptable offering to that most holy, pure and righteous God, "in whose sight the heavens are not clean." And so it is still with our very best performances in our Christian walk at this present time. They should all be taken by us to the fountain of Christ's blood for their purification. And how much more should

we thus deal with our sins — with our known sins in thought, word, and deed of each recurring day! If we are taught by the Spirit of God — if not left, as reprobate, to ourselves — if the conscience be alive to the heinous character of all disobedience towards God — if we duly feel what are our obligations to Him—if we are cultivating that personal holiness, which is essential for every heir of heaven, then each day of our life and walk will only more and more prove to us our need of Jesus and His blood for each day's transgression. Each day will only make us more and more rejoice that we have for ourselves just such a Saviour, dying for us, pouring out His life-blood for us on the cross, and ever ready, from His seat of intercession at God's right hand in heaven, to apply for our good that fountain opened, in Himself, for all uncleanness and sin. This is our happy case. Living in this spirit, and with these remembrances kept alive within us by the abiding power of the Holy Spirit, we shall come "boldly to the throne of grace," that we may obtain mercy through Christ, granted to us freely for each day's unrighteousness. This is our privilege. Let us make use of it! Let us enjoy it! In our best days we omit many things which we ought to do, and we do many things which we ought to leave undone; and self tarnishes our best devotions; and mixed motives sadly interfere with our giving all the glory to our God in any thing: and our tempers and our dispositions often incur guilt; and our tongues

often speak words which we afterwards feel ought not to have been said, or leave words unspoken to which we should have given utterance; and many are the actions of God's most favoured saints, which should specially bring them to their knees for pardon through Jesus—and such being the state of God's people, it is a happy thing that we have free, ever open access to our God by Christ Jesus at all times and in all places. And, confessing to Him, we at once receive full absolution from Him, spoken to our inward spirit, from the mercy-seat. Thus let us act continually, and such grace and favour shall ever be upon us! This is the allowed and honoured way to be delivered from all fear of condemnation! This is the allowed and honoured way to obtain a renewed sense of our acceptance with God, as His dear children! This is the way to reach the very presence of the living God, in faith, rather than to feel at a distance from Him through the conscience of sin! This is the way to walk at liberty with Him, in the spirit of adoption and grace! This is the way to magnify and glorify that gracious plan of redemption, in which the love, wisdom, power, justice and holiness of God all so conspicuously meet and shine forth! This is the way to learn new lessons on the unspeakable worth of our Redeemer, as the sinner's Friend! This is the way to enjoy "perfect peace!" This is the way to "renew our strength" for the active and untiring service of our God. The "joy of the Lord" is our best strength, and nothing makes that joy spring

and play and burst forth more gladly than the sense of forgiven sin — more than the sense of a Saviour's love and a full appreciation of His work for us, through the blood of the cross. And what shall I say more on this blessed subject? Nothing but this. Only would I lead and encourage you more and more to abound in daily confessions like these, in the reception of these daily and hourly absolutions. Seek thus to live a "life of faith in the Son of God," as the one sacrifice for all your transgression, as the Lamb of God which taketh away your sin, far, far away from the sight of God, and never to be mentioned against you any more. This will make you walk before your God more humbly than ever; but at the same time with more peace, with more joy, with more liberty! And think how Satan will accuse you in vain, if you thus accuse yourselves. No judgment shall be brought against you, if you thus judge yourselves. No pleader in the universe will be able to establish any thing against your cause, if you thus plead continually guilty and unclean at the throne of grace, sprinkled with the Mediator's blood. The Lord will rejoice in you; and you will rejoice in Him, as One preserving you in this blessed frame of reconciliation with your Maker. You will more and more love, honour, serve and glorify that Lord God and Saviour, whose blood on the cross washed you and made you "clean every whit," and who leads you, by His Spirit, to receive and enjoy the application of that cleansing fount not only for all

your original sin and for all the former trangressions of your life, but for the sins of each passing day and hour till you enter that rest and glory which sin shall reach no more. God grant you to understand, value and realize these mighty privileges! God grant a large increase of the number among us, who may be able so to do; and to those, thus qualified already by divine grace, may He give increased life, vigour, comfort and delight in their daily approaches to the throne of grace! May He pour down among them still more light, and still more love and a still more adoring view and perception of all those excellencies, found, contained and offered to us sinners in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might be "clean every whit," and accepted in His sight both now and for ever! May our fellowship with Him, as a suffering Saviour, be more close, more loving, more dutiful than ever — more approaching that which we all must acknowledge it ought to be towards One, who, having been crucified for us, and having thus "overcome the sharpness of death, hath opened the kingdom of heaven unto all believers."

SERMON XIII.

ALL PRAYER GRANTED WHEN MADE IN CHRIST'S NAME.

JOHN XIV. 13, 14.

Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

THESE words of our Lord Jesus Christ form part of that last consolatory, cheering discourse which He held with His disciples just before He left them. A similar promise is repeated in the next chapter, where Jesus, having assured His disciples that He had chosen and ordained them to "bear fruit," adds, (as inseparably connecting prayer in His name with this fruit-bearing state,) "that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you[a]." Nor could any promises more suit the occasion on which they were made. For a certain season Jesus had been to His beloved followers all which their hearts could desire, and more than they could ever have conceived. He had been their comfort,

[a] John xv. 16.

their strength, and their joy. No doubt they had often asked many things of Him; and from Him they had been accustomed to receive far, far more than they had ventured to ask for. But now He was about to leave thom: "I go" (He saith) "to prepare a place for you." And notwithstanding all the obscurity in which His disciples were involved, concerning all their Saviour's Person and work, until the Holy Ghost came upon them with power on the day of Pentecost, still they knew enough to apprehend that His bodily presence was to be no more granted them—at least for a season. On this account "sorrow filled their hearts." And to comfort them in this special sorrow—to strengthen them for that great and glorious work to which they were appointed—to enable them to come with all faith and all confidence unto the throne of grace—to shew them that His own honour and their well-being were inseparably joined—were in fact one undivided thing, as the welfare of the members and the body is one with the honour and glory of the Head—with such purposes in His loving heart Jesus uttered this Divine and mighty declaration; "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it."

It is not my purpose to dwell on the general subject of prayer—on that important and indispensable part of every Christian's life which prayer to God must and will occupy. But the

points which I shall now take up are especially these—first, the need of our prayers being offered in the name of Jesus, as our Mediator, coming and standing and interceding between God and us—secondly, the promise and assurance that all prayer offered in his name shall be heard, and answered. Lastly, I shall note a very common subject of perplexity among people who really pray, and seek to prove, that, in spite of apparent denial, all prayer, made in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, is really answered, as He Himself, infallibly and unquestionably, assures us in the text.

All prayer must be offered in the name and mediation of our Saviour. Except as redeemed creatures, we have no permission and no right to approach God at all. Otherwise He must be, unto sinful and fallen creatures like ourselves, "a consuming fire," "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto." All this was so plainly typified and represented in the Israelitish history, that nothing can render it more clear than a reference to it. When the people stood before God "in the day of the assembly" at mount Horeb, what was their cry? "Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not[b]." And God said, "They have well spoken that which they have spoken:" and Moses alone was permitted a close access to God, in order that he might come, stand, act, and intercede between

[b] Deuteronomy xviii. 16.

God and men, as the Mediator of the old covenant. Moreover, he occupied this wonderful place, not on account of any peculiar merit or excellency in himself, but just as typifying and representing Jesus Christ our Lord, the Mediator of the new covenant, sanctioned and sealed by His own precious blood. And not only so, but exactly the same truth was taught by the high priest going in alone once a year into the Holy of Holies, not without blood, and in the name of all God's people Israel. Accordingly, while we come before God, resting on the multitude of his mercies; and while we enjoy our reconciled Father's love; and while we are entitled to ask every good thing from Him, for body and soul, for ourselves and others, for this world and eternity; we, if taught truly by the Holy Spirit, shall never ask or expect any good gift, of any kind whatsoever, except just and solely on account of the merits and the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." We dishonour God by any other mode of approach to Him. And let no one say or think that this is a narrow or limited view of God's mercy, goodness, and love. If this was really true, even then it would be our duty at once to acquiesce in it, and to receive any blessing or gift which God might be willing to bestow, just in that one way which God had appointed. But I say that this is not a narrow nor a limited view —for in Jesus Christ "all fulness dwells:" and in Him are stored and treasured up abundantly

all good gifts for us; and unfallen Adam himself, in all the bliss of paradise, could not ask more, or even so much as we can, or expect more, or even so much as we can, who ask, and receive, not only as created, but as redeemed by God "manifest in the flesh," in the person of Jesus Christ. Away therefore, at once and for ever, with all thoughts of receiving either mercy, or pardon, or exemption from God's wrath, or acceptance with Him, or any good gift, except through and for the merits of Jesus Christ, "by whom alone" (as our Communion Service so fully tells out) "we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven." And while we put away all such vain and unscriptural thoughts, let us receive with truth, and power, and joyful application to ourselves, the privilege assured to us by Jesus Himself: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

Thus much on the need of prayer, and praise, and all worship whatsoever being offered in the name of Jesus, and through Him only. Merely to worship God, as some unknown, though Almighty Being, is not to be a Christian. To deserve that honourable name, or to enjoy any of its true privileges, either here or hereafter, we must worship Him as revealed—i. e. in and through Jesus Christ. And in all the range of Divinity no subject of more practical importance

can be impressed on the human heart: for believe me when I say, that the world at large, though ever comparatively willing to acknowledge and speak of God merely as the Almighty, is ever unwilling to acknowledge and to speak of Jesus Christ as God revealed unto man—as the dying and the suffering Saviour, as the only and exclusive way for any one on earth to come to God and be saved. Yea, more! The Scripture itself tells us, that no man can say that "Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost[c]." Thus much, I repeat, on the need of prayer, through Jesus, as the Mediator, standing and interceding between God and man. And now to the second part of our subject, prominently put before us in the text.

It is not merely that some prayer, but that all prayer, offered in His name, is received and granted: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do."

And first, let me state, that wide, grand, and comprehensive as this promise is, it is by no means a solitary passage of the kind. Very much the contrary. In fact, all the assurances of Scripture, relative to prayer in the name of Jesus, are precisely of the same character. See, for instance, the Sermon on the Mount! "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." No limitation there! Again Jesus saith; "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them[d]." No limitation there

[c] 1 Cor. xii. 3. [d] Mark xi. 24.

Once more He saith; "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full[e]." Again, no limitation! What blessed encouragements are here! What a blessed liberty opened before us in our petitions to God! What blessed assurances! Yet there are many among real Christians too who, though God limits them not, sadly limit themselves in their supplications. But this is their own doing, not God's. Accordingly they suffer loss—much loss of privilege—much loss of good things. I have heard some speak as if they were unwilling to lay their temporal affairs before God, under the erroneous impression of their spiritual wants being so immeasurably greater than any temporal things, that these latter were not worth mentioning in His ear at all. I have known others who have gone for days and months in sickness and in pain, but without prayer for ease, relief, and restoration, from some scruples of the same kind. And others have continued long, desiring in their hearts things perfectly innocent, things blessed as God's own appointments, and things with which both Scripture and nature teaches that rich blessings are connected, (such, for instance, as some among the connexions and relationships of life,) but yet have not ventured to present such matters unto God. Others again would seem (by their conduct) to think, that the small, daily, hourly circumstances of their life

[e] John xvi. 23, 24.

were apart from the eye of God, and did not require to be guided by Him, nor sanctified by prayer, nor acknowledged with thanksgiving. But surely the Word of God, the example of His saints, and the language of precept and promise by our Lord Jesus Christ speaks very differently —encourages us to act quite in another way. Passing over spiritual things, which all acknowledge as calling for prayer, I would name things of another kind. Does Paul want a safe journey? He prays for it. Does Hezekiah want to be cured of his sickness? He prays for it. Is Peter in prison? Prayer is made for his deliverance. Is rain wanted? Elijah prays, and rain is given. Does Hezekiah want protection against the mighty besieger? He prays for it. Does Daniel want to have a dream interpreted? He prays for it. Does Nehemiah want the favour of the king? He prays for it. Is Jacob afraid of his brother's wrath? He prays that it may be restrained. Does Eliezer want special direction as to the wife appointed for his master's son? He prays for it. Does Hannah desire a child? She prays for one; and in due time she saith, with little Samuel before her, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition, which I asked of Him." Did men ask of Jesus hearing, and seeing, and cures of disease, and all such gifts, recorded in a few instances, but granted in a multitude of instances, too numerous to tell or to record, and shall we not receive and rejoice in our text, which I will not repeat again, but another in the

Once more He saith; "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full[e]." Again, no limitation! What blessed encouragements are here! What a blessed liberty opened before us in our petitions to God! What blessed assurances! Yet there are many among real Christians too who, though God limits them not, sadly limit themselves in their supplications. But this is their own doing, not God's. Accordingly they suffer loss—much loss of privilege—much loss of good things. I have heard some speak as if they were unwilling to lay their temporal affairs before God, under the erroneous impression of their spiritual wants being so immeasurably greater than any temporal things, that these latter were not worth mentioning in His ear at all. I have known others who have gone for days and months in sickness and in pain, but without prayer for ease, relief, and restoration, from some scruples of the same kind. And others have continued long, desiring in their hearts things perfectly innocent, things blessed as God's own appointments, and things with which both Scripture and nature teaches that rich blessings are connected, (such, for instance, as some among the connexions and relationships of life,) but yet have not ventured to present such matters unto God. Others again would seem (by their conduct) to think, that the small, daily, hourly circumstances of their life

[e] John xvi. 23, 24.

say, came not. They enjoyed no consolation. No apparent good was done to the object of their Christian concern. They were dumb when they felt that they should have spoken openly and boldly in their Saviour's praise, and in confession of His name. Or take temporal things! You have asked for health, but sickness continues—for ease, but pain still afflicts you—for the life of a beloved one, but death took the sufferer away—for aid in poverty, but poverty is still your lot—for friends, but you are still desolate—for a clear path before you, but perplexity surrounds you still; or for any thing else, whatsoever it might be, touching your comfort and your life's happiness—I say, you perhaps have asked such things, and that too in the name of the Lord Jesus, but you have not had them. And therefore you want it explained how your experience can correspond to the text—how you can say your own personal Amen to the many declarations of the kind, found in God's Word, some of which I have now quoted, as uttered by the Lord of all truth and glory. Now all is explained, when we remember, that the true believer in Christ habitually does exercise, and knows that he ought always to exercise, one grand desire, paramount to all the wishes of his own heart. He does habitually desire, and knows how he should always desire, that God would not grant him his petitions, if it be not for the glory of God and according to His sovereign will—or if the refusal of his request, and the appointment of a

different lot be better for him (in the all-wise and loving purposes of God) than that which he himself seeks. To ask otherwise would just be irreverence, presumption, and petulance—yes, oftentimes our complete ruin. However earnestly we ask any thing from God, every one of us, as Christians, must feel that all should be asked in due subordination to His power, who is mightier than us, to His wisdom, who is wiser than us, and to His love, who loves us more than we can love ourselves[g]. And, indeed, when we duly consider it, this appears the very and precise truth, which enables us to make our supplications at all with any thing like firmness, heartiness, or peace of mind. I only do the true Christian justice when I speak of it as his habitual and prominent wish that his most earnest prayers should not be granted, if not for the glory of God and his own true benefit. Therefore, if at any time, through our own forgetfulness, or through excitement or weakness of the flesh, or too inordinate desire of that which our heart longs for, we omit to add this limitation[h], surely no Christian, in his

[g] "This is a large grant to ask what we will, and to have promise of obtaining it; but He who promiseth to believers what they will, doth likewise regulate and confine their will to desire nothing but with subordination to His will; nothing but their own portion, that which is food convenient for them. The heathen man could say, Tantum habet, quantum vult, qui nihil vult nisi quod habet (Seneca). So we may say of a Christian, he hath indeed whatsoever he will, because God gives him a heart to desire nothing but that which is God's promise and his own necessity." Reynolds, Life of Christ, on Matthew xv. 28.

[h] "It is safe for men to insert conditional causes in their

spiritual senses, would wish that God should forget it too, or omit to exercise this judgment in his behalf. And thus, I trust, we see, that whatsoever, as Christians, we ask in the name of Jesus, and in a frame of mind fit to make our petitions at all, is heard and answered in some sure way by God. And strange as it may seem, and, I doubt not, will seem unto many hearers; and hard as the saying may sound to the inexperienced ear, yea, contradictory too, nevertheless, I hesitate not to say, that, according to these principles, the apparent denial of our prayer is a real answer to our prayer—that is, to its best, uppermost, highest, and holiest flight, when, having poured forth our own aspirations, and told before the Lord our wants and our feelings, or the gifts which we desire, our prayers are sanctified, and rendered for us all truly safe and all truly good, by this language of our lips, or, at all events, of our hearts, after the example of our great Master and Lord: "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done[i]."

But, in conclusion, I would observe, that, after all, few, few, indeed, as compared with evident

prayers, if it may stand with God's good will and pleasure, used by the best men (not to say the best of bests) (Matt. xxvi. 39) in their petitions: 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' (Matt. viii. 2.) Such wary reservations will not be interpreted, in the court of heaven, want of faith, but store of humility, in such particulars, where such persons have no plenary assurance of God's pleasure." T. Fuller, Pisgah Sight of Palestine, book v. chap. v. sect. 5.

[i] Luke xxii. 42.

grants to prayer, are even the apparent denials of prayer, when made in the name of Jesus our Mediator! Yes! it was well to refer to such cases, lest they should prove a perplexity and stumblingblock unto any single mind. But, I repeat, how few are such cases, when compared with the evident answers to such prayers! Often you have found, no doubt, that you were in much need of help and of gifts from your God, either in your inward spirit, or in something which concerned your outward life or happiness. You have felt your own extremity, but that was God's opportunity. The Spirit led you to pour forth your petitions to Him in the name of His own dear Son. Then, while you were yet speaking, or inconceivably soon, or at all events just at the right and befitting time, you received the desire of your heart, and the request of your lips. I ask, is it not so? In giving such testimony all God's children can unite with one simultaneous voice. Happy are they who most experience such things! And may these blessed truths, these glad remembrances, stir us all up more—far more than ever—to prayer for all good things, and in all circumstances—for ourselves and for others—for body and soul—for this world and eternity! And may it be the "prayer of faith!" From it, or rather, from God through it, as His own ordained means, let us ever expect and anticipate ample and glorious results! And let us remember ever to employ it, in the name of Jesus, under the mighty sanction and warrant of His own

most faithful Word; and then, then indeed, how surely and fully shall He accomplish for us the precious assurance of the text: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

SERMON XIV.

THE LORD'S SUPPER RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTIVE.

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1 CORINTHIANS XI. 26.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.

THAT Holy Spirit, who, by different evangelists and different inspired writers, teaches us every thing needful and beneficial for us to know, has given us, through St. Paul, the precious verse of our text, as a very brief but mighty exposition on the duty and the privilege attached to a due, spiritual communion at the table of the Lord: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." And if we remember how the subject of the Lord's Supper is introduced in this passage; and also bear in mind that most important information, which is there given to us on that subject, we shall plainly see that, through God's overruling hand, out of things shewing man's sin and wickedness come forth results tending to God's

glory and to the benefit of Christ's church. So, to speak humanly, had it not been for the murmurs of the Pharisees, as to Christ's "receiving sinners" and "eating with them," we should not have had the three blessed parables contained in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke. For correcting the sin of the Pharisees, Jesus spake of the lost sheep, of the lost piece of money, and of the prodigal son, all exhibiting one truth — even the extent of God's mercy and welcome unto "all who truly repent and unfeignedly believe the Gospel." So too here. The Corinthians, lately won to Christianity from the ranks of heathenism, had grievously sinned in the participation of the Lord's Supper. They had carried it on in a most disorderly manner — coming together and attending at the feast "not" (as St. Paul says) "for the better, but for the worse" — with divisions, pride, and selfishness, and (strange as it may appear to us) with absolute drunkenness and surfeiting, and open contempt of the wants and feelings of the poorer brethren. "For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not[a]?" — i. e. those that are in need and poverty. St. Paul writes to correct all these profane doings, and to lead the Corinthians into a becoming knowledge and practice of this holy ordinance. And hence not only the Corinthians and the

[a] 1 Cor. xi. 21, 22.

church of that day, but the church ever since has received, in this chapter, the fullest exposition of the Lord's Supper which is to be found throughout the whole course of God's holy Word —and hence, as the rich sum and substance of all, it is written for us, in regard to this sacred ordinance—"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come."

There are manifold ways in which the subject of the Lord's Supper might be considered, and in which our text itself would supply profitable matter both for thoughtful minds and for loving hearts. Of these I shall take one. I shall take it as pointing in two directions—to a Saviour crucified, and to a Saviour glorified—as being a link or connection between the first and the second coming of the Lord, acted out and exemplified by the whole line of Christ's faithful witnesses in all times, and by us whenever we partake of the Supper of the Lord. For in so doing (according to the text) we "shew the Lord's death till He come."

Let me preface my other and more prolonged statements with a few brief observations, as to the mode and character of that shewing which is here referred to—shewing our Lord's death!

The original word (here translated "shew[b]") is the same as that used in the eighth verse of the first chapter to the Romans, describing the eminent faith of the converts in that city, as

[b] Καταγγέλλετε.

"spoken of throughout the world"—or of being thus widely shewn. The same original word is translated in the second verse of the fourth of he Acts "preached." The apostles "preached" (or shewed) "through Jesus the resurrection of the dead." Now these parallel texts may assist us to a lively apprehension of the word "shew," as expressly used in our text. There are many ways of shewing a thing. We may shew a thing by our language, voice, and utterance — for instance, shew our devotion to God by words of prayer and thanksgiving — shew our gratitude to Jesus by telling others about His love, whether as a Minister in public, or whether as a Christian in private and social life. Again, (as it is expressed in our Liturgy,) we may shew a thing by our lives. We may shew the praises of our God "not only with our lips, but in our lives." We may shew a thing by signs, using the members of the body independently of the voice, as dumb people do, as Zechariah did, when struck speechless for a season, on account of his want of faith, and therefore obliged to "beckon to the people." We may shew a thing by certain memorials — as by the stone which Samuel set up, and called "Eben-ezer," for a lasting and visible remembrance of God's help — as by the heap of stones piled up in Jordan—as by the columns and monuments raised in our own country in remembrance of illustrious men — as by the tablets and the tombstones, which mourning affection consecrates in memory of those once dear to us on earth, but

now departed and lost to the sight of our eyes. And, lastly, we may shew a thing in certain acts, done by ourselves, in our living bodies, and with our personal faculties employed in those acts, whether they recur at fixed periodical times, or as fitting occasions may point out. People (for instance) shew their attachment to the place of their education or their profession, or to their country when in a foreign clime, or to some great political leader, or to some principle, by meeting together, in honour of that school, that profession, that country, that illustrious man, or that principle. And thus they openly shew or make known their views, and their feelings, or their union together in one distinct cause.

The text employs the word *shew*, representing an act, similar to that which I have introduced as the last in this enumeration. The religion of Jesus was not to be a secret, solitary, hidden and mysterious thing, merely received in each separate heart, and no further displayed or made manifest by the individual who had received the blessing. No! Very much the contrary. Every soldier of Christ has had given him a banner from the hand of the Lord. Why? Not, of course, that it should be wrapped up or concealed; but, to use the beautiful language of the Psalmist—"that it may be displayed because of the truth[c]." An open confession of Christ is, throughout Scripture, inseparably connected with inward faith in Him, as, for instance, it is declared in the tenth

[c] Psalm lx. 4.

chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved[d]." Our Lord and Saviour ever proclaimed the severest judgment against all who should deny Him before men, side by side with the most strengthening and encouraging promises in behalf of all who should openly confess Him. In a word, His people are to shew "whose they are and whom they serve"—are to "shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light"—are to be "as a city set upon a hill"—are to be witnesses for Him, "holding forth the word of life, in every place, whithersoever they go, or wheresoever they abide." Such is to be their general character. Such is to be their general—yes, I may say, their universal—conduct, in His name, for His glory, and for their own most sure, rich, and eternal reward.

But, besides this, there are special acts, which God has appointed and sanctioned in His holy Word, as special professions of our faith, to be publicly made, and as special means of grace, which we, in public, are to cultivate. Solemn and united worship in the great congregation on the Lord's day is one of them. St. Paul particularly warns the Christians of his day and all days not to "forsake the assembling of themselves" together; though from the passage in the Hebrews, where this exhortation comes in, it is

[d] Verse 9.

evident that great danger and much persecution accompanied this public act. Therefore those persons err very grievously indeed, who think that they are not guilty, in God's sight, for omitting a regular attendance at church, on the plea that they can pray and search the Scriptures at home. Besides other evils attending this sin, such persons omit to make that great habitual public profession of Christ Jesus the Lord, without which He will not and cannot be well pleased.

Let it be observed that I am confining our attention now to one single topic, although I endeavour to illustrate it in various lights. That one topic is — the shewing forth of our Christian position, of our Christian principles, and our Christian affections, by certain open and public acts. And now it is time to consider how the Lord Jesus, in His divine love, wisdom, and foresight, condescended to establish one special act, to be done in His church, and by which His people should "shew the Lord's death till He come." That act was — a solemn and religious assembly of themselves to eat bread and drink of the cup of wine in His blessed name. I cannot do better here than to quote from the Prayer of Consecration in the Communion Service of our Prayer Book. "In the same night that He was betrayed, He took bread; and, when he had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of Me. Like-

wise, after supper, He took the cup; and, when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this: for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins: Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me[e]." On which quotation, from Christ's word in the Gospel, the inspired comment of St. Paul, given in our text, is — "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come."

Thus was the Supper of the Lord established by the Lord Jesus Himself, as a permanent memorial and communion of Himself, to be maintained and to be partaken of by all the members of His church until His future coming in glory and majesty. But from attention to this ordinance, as a memorial, I think it best that we should not depart now, whatsoever we might do at other times. No one among us will, I trust, deny, that to all who rightly partake of the Supper of the Lord there is in it the "strengthening and refreshing of our souls," as our bodies are refreshed by bread and wine. No one among us, who knows any thing, as he ought to do, about means of grace — that is, holy and solemn appointments of God, for the growth and nurture of true religion and godliness among us — will or can be ignorant about this ordinance, as holding its high and honourable place among the means of

[e] Communion Service.

grace and Divine appointments of God for our soul's health, welfare and salvation. Still less can any true and enlightened communicant fail to experience the benefit thereof, as acting, spiritually, in and upon himself in many and various ways. But in a grand and extensive topic, such as that of this Sacrament, it is, I conceive, far more desirable to choose certain departments of the truth, and to dwell on them fully, than to embrace too much, and so deteriorate and weaken the effect which each truth in such holy things ought to have and to hold in us. Again, therefore, let us refer to the Sacrament, as the standing memorial of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be kept up by His people until the end of this present world, when all such memorials shall be needed no more, for they shall then "see Him as He is," and "be for ever with the Lord."

At the Lord's Supper then we keep up the remembrance of Christ's death. We shew it at this ordinance. The bread broken is the sign, emblem, or symbol of Christ's body, crucified, afflicted, mutilated for us on the cross at Calvary; and it might be stated with truth, that this bread, when rightly discerned, is a sermon in itself — not a sermon, of course, spoken to the ears, but one addressed to the senses of sight, and taste, and touch, which God has formed, not less than hearing, for His own glory and for the conveyance of truth to our minds and affections. Jesus saith of the sight, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Jesus bade the incredu-

lous Thomas reach his finger and his hand, and so to draw assurance that none but Jesus addressed him. There He employs the touch. So in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Nothing, of course, can bless any sermon, spoken to the ears, but the Spirit Himself. And nothing but the Spirit can bless the sight, or the touch, or the taste of the broken bread, representing Christ's body broken on the cross, unto the real good of the communicant. But, with that blessing and with that power exercised in us from on high, the sign is most significant, the type is most expressive, the symbol most eloquent. And then not in vain is it said to us, with the bread offered and given into our hands: "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."

Again, the wine poured out represents the blood of Jesus, shed at Calvary on that wondrous day, when our Redeemer "poured out His soul unto death," that "a fountain might be thus opened for all sin and uncleanness," in which we might be washed and made whiter than snow. Wine, as we well know, has ever been held among the most precious things which God has given to man, in all the produce of the earth. It, no doubt, and all things which intoxicate, has been and is most awfully abused; but still man's abuse does not alter the excellency of God's gift, when rightly employed, as a restorative, and as a refreshment to man. The Scripture itself proves

this beyond all disputation; for wine is not only used there as expressive of temporal blessings, but of spiritual blessings too. In the Song of Solomon the church of Christ thus addresses her Lord and Saviour; "Thy love is better than wine:" and the patriarch Jacob blesses his son Judah thus; "He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes." And Jesus Himself has employed and honoured this symbol of wine as representing His most precious blood: and when the minister of Jesus delivers you the "cup of blessing," the accompanying words express the nature of that mystery, thus preached and revealed and brought to your remembrance in holy act and deed: "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee, and be thankful."

Thus we have that marvellous privilege of shewing the Lord's death—of assembling at his table to eat by faith of His flesh, and to drink by faith of His blood. We do so verily, emblematically, spiritually, exercising faith in Christ's offering of Himself for us through His "meritorious cross and passion, whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven[e]." But, as I have stated before, and as the text presses upon our attention, this Sacrament is not only a retrospective thing, but prospective too. It should not only send and di-

[e] Communion Service.

rect our holy meditations back to Christ's death, but also forward to Christ's future coming. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." "Ye," —that is, the continued line of Christ's church— the living, incorporate members of His body— His holy witnesses from generation to generation, till He cometh again. We doubt not, that as this ordinance has been maintained, in all its simplicity, and yet in all its glory, by the line of true witnesses to Jesus since it was established by Himself at Jerusalem, so it will be maintained until the day of His return in His majesty, when He shall be revealed to the whole universe in His glorified humanity, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." This is clearly announced in the language of the text. Blessed and happy truth! We, in our day, assemble, or, at all events, we ought to assemble, in the Lord's name, to exercise this high privilege—to partake of this spiritual feast—to keep up the memory and anticipation of the Lord by these very means which He Himself has ordained. We rejoice, or, at all events, we ought to rejoice, in this ordinance, humbling ourselves unto the very dust of degradation under the sense of our own sin and wickedness, which never, never could have been forgiven had not our Saviour accomplished in His body that act of suffering and death which we meet to commemorate. We rejoice, or, at all events, we ought to rejoice, in this ordinance, being exalted in the Lord, and knowing that in

Him, and for His sake, who died for us, we are accepted and made alive unto God, and that in Him we shall live for ever, His children—heirs of glory. We meet from opportunity to opportunity at the table of the Lord. But our days are rapidly passing away: and as the members of some earthly society miss, each year, one or more of their company, so it is with the members of Christ's church in this present world. Their place at church, and as communicants at the table of the Lord, "knoweth them no more." For they "sleep in Jesus." They are in paradise with their Redeemer. Each individual Christian thus departs from the earth. But the church dies not. The church fails not. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. "I the Lord do keep it[f]"—is the warrant and the word of its continuance on earth till the Saviour cometh again. And this holy ordinance will continue also—neglected altogether by multitudes, as now—a formality to many—superstitiously regarded by many—but in itself not the less glorious—a strength to the weary, a comfort to the sorrowful, a pledge of Christ's marvellous love, an honour to the Saviour, an act of faith, performed by His people, in thankful obedience to that dying command; "Do this in remembrace of Me." May God fill us with an increased sense of that high privilege which is ours at the table of the Lord! May He enlighten us in all spiritual discernment! May He make all our

[f] Isaiah xxvii. 3.

practice more consistent than ever with this confession and with this profession of our loving Lord! May the number of true, faithful communicants be largely multiplied: and let all attend who know their own sin, and feel the value of a Saviour, and lead a holy life, and are in charity with men: for such are all worthy to come, not through their own personal worthiness, but through the worthiness of Christ; and such are all welcome in the Lord's name to meet with their brethren and sisters at the table of the Lord, and to be of that number who, spiritually and in faith, "eat of this bread and drink of this cup, and shew the Lord's death till He come."

SERMON XV.

CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF ALL FRUITFUL DISCIPLESHIP.

JOHN XV. 8.

Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be My disciples.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ had just been teaching about the union of His people with Himself by the figure of a vine and its branches. Again, He employs the representation of a vine and its fruit to shew the necessity of each one, personally, manifesting that conduct in the sight of God which is pleasing and acceptable to Him; even as a vine, well laden with its rich clusters of grapes, is pleasing in the owner's sight. Most interesting indeed, and most adapted to us is such instruction! For we all know that as a vine and its living fruit-bearing branches make up a tree of the utmost value belonging to any known plant, so Jesus and His people, united unto Him, are most dear and prized in the Father's eye. And we know also, that, as any good gardener attends carefully to each branch of his vines, and

cleans or purges away from each fruitful sprout all which could harm or lessen its fruitfulness, so does God act, by the Holy Spirit and the application of means, on the mind and heart of every true Christian. And again we know, that, in the cultivation of the vine many and many a branch, all full of leaves, is cut and pruned away, because unfruitful. So God will not finally permit any mere professor of the name of Christ to occupy a place among the saved inhabitants of heaven. And we also know that the branches of the vine, when once severed from the parent stock, are utterly worthless. As Ezekiel saith, in the fifteenth chapter of his prophecy; "Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?" Or, as it is declared in the passage before us: "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." For the vine branch when fruitful is a most precious plant, but when dead is good for nothing but the fire. Which most solemnly tells the exceeding contrast wherewith God regards each true believer and each mere nominal adherent of Christ—in reality dead, though with a name to live. And, lastly, as a vine branch (though weak, and frail in itself, and unable to support even its own weight without props and stays)

puts forth fruit of such beauty and luxuriance, as to be unrivalled by any other tree in the garden or field, just because of the sap and the strength derived from the stem whence it grows, so each true, living believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has beauty and glory and all Christian excellency in him, just because the Lord is the Giver of his life and the author of all his graces and gifts through vital, spiritual union with Himself. Thus wonderfully, yet most simply, are we prepared for the declaration of our text. Thus, from the image of a single tree, and from its well known properties, striking us at once by their extreme aptitude—thus we are prepared to hear our Saviour's own sure word: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be My disciples."

This passage connects heaven with earth, or, to speak more accurately still, connects God Almighty Himself with the members of His church living and acting in this present world. For it tells us, first, that God is glorified through them. Secondly, it tells through what special conduct on their part this grand result is obtained—namely, "by their bearing much fruit." And, lastly, we learn that in this consists all true discipleship towards Jesus Christ: "So shall ye be My disciples." May God the Spirit guide and bless us, powerfully and effectually, while we consider the text under these three distinct aspects!

The first thought which it presents is, that God

can be glorified through our conduct as His creatures. And this is a truth which ought to be realized with all due clearness. Otherwise we can scarcely understand any thing at all about true religion—about that which unites and binds us to our God in heaven. God is the only self-existent Being. But He has created an innumerable multitude of living creatures, from the highest principalities, unfallen powers, and angelic hosts, down to the very worms which dwell in the clods of the earth, and to creatures far more insignificant, whom we cannot even see with our eyes, but which inhabit the earth which we tread, the waters which we drink, and the very air which we breathe. And God has done this for His own glory. And all unfallen and intelligent creatures do glorify Him by their intelligent service, obedience and praise, while the lowest creature in the scale of creation does glorify Him, by instinctively following out, in all things, His divine purpose, will, and design. But we have comparatively little, very little to do with that which goes on among the principalities, powers, and unfallen angels, to whom I have referred. We have little, very little indeed to do with that which may go on, for the glory of God, in those orbs and constellations of heaven which we gaze on with our eyes, and every one of which may be inhabited by living creatures, whom the Lord has made, and among whom He may preserve life and all faculties of life, for His own glory. With these matters we have little—

with some of them nothing whatsoever to do. The earth, on which we dwell — we the human race, which inhabit it — there is the chief and immediate concern of this present life. Hereafter, "we shall know even as we are known:" but now we must concentrate our interest on that which refers to God as dealing with us men, and to us men, in our relationship to God. As God made all other creatures for His own glory, so He made man for His own glory, at our first parents' original creation; and for His own glory He preserves all human life on the earth. I shall not think, here, of entering on that question, why He permits so much to be done upon earth, which seems to militate against that glory—so much of sin, so much of disobedience. But it only seems so to do. Time and the coming day will reveal, that, even out of these most perplexing and most terrible things, God's own glory will ultimately shine in all its blaze of brightness—in all its full perfection. But when we take that Bible in our hands, to which in all subjects like these we must closely and perseveringly hold fast, there we find, that, notwithstanding our first parents' transgression — notwithstanding all the sin, since that time committed in the world, God has taken most special and remarkable means to have His name glorified among men. This golden skein is ever woven into the rude web of the world's history. He "hath not left Himself without witness" in this inhabited globe. Hence He inflicted the curse upon Adam and

Eve's sin, but hence also He made the promise of Jesus the Saviour, to bruise the serpent's head. Hence He sent the flood: but hence also He preserved Noah and his family and all the accompanying creatures in the ark. Hence He chose one alone—I mean Abraham—who should be the father and head of a chosen nation, the Jews—and though He suffered Abraham's descendants to groan for a time in the bondage of Egypt, hence He delivered them with His own right hand, and for greater glory to Himself and them than if they had never been a race of burdened and oppressed slaves. But the time would fail us to pursue, even in the most brief and summary way, all that God especially did among men with an eye to His own glory in the salvation of souls by Jesus Christ His own dear Son. For to that, of course, I am leading you on. And when the due time arrived, He actually sent His Son, in His own infinite love, to die for ungodly sinners such as we are, to give Himself for us, to pour out His soul unto death. And Jesus came to this earth for the glory of the Father. And His declarations were ever such as these, while He fulfilled His appointed mission, and did His appointed work upon the earth among us men—His words, I say, were ever such as these: "I seek not Mine own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Me." And He ever acted in this spirit and with such a testimony ever sounding forth from His lips. And in the time of His extreme trial and trouble of soul, His address to the Father

was: "Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again[a]."

We have, secondly, to connect all this with the language of our text: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Not only through Jesus Himself, but also through all believers in Him, through all the true members of His church God was to be glorified. And now, passing over the incomparable sum of glory which must accrue to Almighty God for the redemption of every believing soul, through that special manner which He has devised and executed, viz. through His love, power, wisdom, holiness, mercy, justice, and all the other attributes gathered together in one great focus of light shining forth from the cross of Christ—passing over all this, or, rather, only just observing it—we find in our text one special mode, whereby all believers live to the praise and glory to God. It is "in bearing much fruit." I need not explain what the word *fruit* means, further than to say that it includes every exercise of the inward spirit, every word expressed, and every action done in a manner acceptable to God, and dictated by the Spirit. Thoughts, tempers, dispositions of the mind and heart—these in Scripture are termed *fruit*. The "fruit of the Spirit" (saith St. Paul to the Galatians) "is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance[b]." Words of prayer and

[a] John xii. 28. [b] Chap. v. 22, 23.

praise are termed "fruit of our lips[c]." Good actions and Christian deeds are termed *fruit*. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is the testimony of Jesus concerning His people. No one will deny the necessity of bearing some such fruit. But the point of the text — the special aim of our Lord—consists in the exhortation that we should bear "much fruit." Let us suppose a garden highly cultivated—richly supplied with labour, manure, and all which skill and liberal expenditure could possibly provide. Let us suppose it sheltered from each keen blast, with a fertile soil, and possessed of every advantage. Would a little fruit here and there be an honour to the gardener, or satisfy the owner? No! surely not. Fruit should abound on all sides. There should be "much fruit." So should it be with us, that our Lord should be well pleased with us — that our God should be glorified by us. What more could have been done for this purpose than hath been done for us? Do we want a motive for such fruitfulness? The highest, the noblest, the most effectual is ours to constrain us. That is, love and gratitude towards Jesus our Saviour, once crucified for us, now interceding for us, and in due time to return for us, and raise us to His own glory. Do we need strength and vigour for such fruitfulness? We have the help of the Holy Spirit Himself, strengthening us with all might in the inner man, making us "strong in the Lord," and enabling us to realize

[c] Hebrews xiii. 15.

that promise of our God, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Do we want protection from all adversaries, that we may grow and become ripe in our Christianity? Be it so! The Lord is a "wall of fire" unto His people. The storm cannot overthrow them. The thief cannot pluck away their fruit. God is their Preserver. And what a soil is theirs! They are planted in the courts of the Lord's house—in a soil enriched by the Saviour's blood, and watered continually by the Holy Spirit with the dew and the showers of His refreshing grace. This, this is the favoured condition of every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." "Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it"—i. e. cleanseth it from all which injures its productiveness—"He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." Thus speaks the Lord! "As a father considers the little services his children do him, not so much with regard to the value of these services, or of the advantages which he finds from them, as of the affection which they express in their little attempts and offers to serve him; so our heavenly Father considers more our hearts and affections than the things themselves which we have done, or indeed can do: of which He stands in no need, but accepts of them as demonstrations of our love and duty. Thus all we have done with a sincere mind for His honour, either in private or public, will be put to our account, and will be separated from its dross. The imperfec-

tions will be forgiven, and what was good in us or our actions will be valued and rewarded, not according to the thing itself, but to the infinite bounty and goodness of Him with whom we have to do[d]." And, being encouraged thus, let us see to it more earnestly and diligently than ever that we "bear much fruit." Let it be our prayer, study, desire, and fixed aim to abound more and more in all holiness and in all righteousness, giving all diligence in adding grace to grace that we may not be "barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!" May God bestow upon us what we have not yet, and increase that already given! And thus we shall be like well-laden trees, without any gaps in their productiveness. And thus we shall glorify God in "bearing much fruit."

One sentence only remains for attention. Our Saviour adds, "so shall ye be my disciples," i. e. in bearing much fruit. Discipleship to Him consisted not then, and consists not now, in the mere hearing of the ear. It was not enough then, nor is it enough now, to be outwardly planted in the garden of God, by which I mean His visible church. It was not enough then, nor is it enough now, merely to bear the leaves of Christian profession. It was not enough then, nor is it enough now, to be "a hearer of the Word and not a doer," "like" (as the apostle saith) "unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, and then going his way, and straightway forgetting what manner

[d] Bishop Burnet.

of man he was." It is not enough merely to hear the Gospel as a lovely song, or to admire its beauty and its symmetry; or to assent to that which the preacher or pastor of Christ commends to our heart for its love, and to our life for its exemplification. No, no! And against these too common errors and delusions—or, more strictly I should say, against these too common practices, Jesus Himself warns us in the text. We claim and profess to be His disciples. But Jesus especially confines His discipleship to a certain class of a certain character. That is quite evident. And to whom, I ask, is it? To those practically holy, godly, and righteous—to those who are fruitful—yes, very fruitful. Adhering to the text, I cannot say less: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." A disciple of Christ just means a Christian—one taught and led and made by Him, through the Holy Ghost, to act as He Himself, in our nature, acted upon the earth—one, briefly, who is a follower of Christ. He left heaven, and became man, for this purpose—even to do the will of Him that sent Him, to make amends for our sin, and bring us to glory. His word is; "As the Father gave Me commandment, so I do." "My meat," saith He, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." And He bore "all manner of fruit"—being Himself, as man, the Branch from David's root—"the planting of the Lord, that he might glorified." You cannot conceive—no imagination

in the whole universe could, I suppose, conceive any sort of merit, any grace, excellency, or gift, which was not in Him. But that is not the exact point which I would press on your attention now. The exact point is, that every imaginable grace, excellency, and gift was among the fruit actually borne and shewn by Him, all ripe, mature—in a word, perfect,—when He came to be our Saviour, to live for us first—to act for us first, and then to suffer and to die for us. Take, for instance, the grace of love: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Faith: "I will put my trust in Him" is applied by the Spirit to Jesus and the Father[e]. Yea, His whole course of action was a life of faith. "I live by the Father," was His word. Joy: "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes[f]." Longsuffering: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." Wisdom: He was "made unto us wisdom." All His life, conversation, and conduct was filled with proofs of it. Courage: When His hour was come to be seized, evil-treated, and crucified, "He set His face stedfastly to go unto Jerusalem"—and thither He went, leading the way before His amazed and distressed followers. Thus, even thus, we might go through every thing true,

[e] Heb. ii. 13. [f] Luke x. 21.

every thing lovely, and every thing excellent; and not only let us be assured that it was in the Saviour, but we might do more, if gifted with capacity, by the Spirit of God, to understand and appreciate all His qualifications for His high work. We might see them all—yes, every one of them—borne by Him as fruit, in the sight of heaven and earth, and exemplified by Him in act and deed. Here was the "much fruit." And as He was in the present world, so will and must all His true disciples be. For theirs, I repeat, is a discipleship unto the conduct of their whole life. In measure and degree they will and must bear every kind of fruit. It is literally and actually so. You cannot, surely, conceive any Christian without love—no, nor without hope, nor without faith, nor without longsuffering, nor without wisdom from on high, nor without courage to endure and to perform that to which God calls him. And even while he laments that he is not more fruitful still—while he regards his own deficiencies, and confesses them to God, and finds them ever bringing him, even again and again, to the cross of the Saviour alone for pardon and acceptance with God, here again is fruit —yes, "much fruit," and fruit too of the most excellent kind in the sight of Almighty God. Therefore, as a minister, I would stir you up to the most lively and most hearty sense of your high privileges in this discipleship. You, if truly in a state of salvation, will not only hereafter be living proofs and evidences for all eternity that God

chose you unto final glory, but at this moment you are living examples of the truth, that God has His people in this very world "elect unto obedience" (to use St. Peter's words) not less than elect unto the "blood of sprinkling," which Christ shed for them[g]. Or, to use St. Paul's words on the same subject, you have been "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them[h]." Therefore I know that every Christian, in the high sense of the word—every one who is Christ's disciple indeed, is glorifying God the Father in bearing "much fruit." An ancient nation had an expression, in the description of a good man, that he was like a "round and polished globe[i]," without irregularities or unseemly flaws. And in somewhat similar train of thought, but fixing our attention still on the view which our text presents, we too may aspire, and, if we are true disciples of Jesus, we must aspire to being like a tree, with fruit on all sides, wherever viewed by the Father's eye—not in the least as our title to pardon, peace, or glory, (for that is all and exclusively in Jesus,) but as the sign that our minds and our hearts and all things within us belong unto our God, and are given up to Him devotedly and unreservedly. In this spirit we shall pray: "Search us, O God, and try our ways, and lead us in the way everlasting." In this spirit we shall act in every-day life—and neither the

[g] 1 Pet. i. 2. [h] Ephes. ii. 10.
[i] "Totus teres atque rotundus."

world, nor the devil, nor our own weakness and our own sinfulness, nor our own inability to bear fruit, except so far as God may render us productive, shall prevent us from standing in the spiritual garden and paradise of our God, as goodly trees, glorifying God our Father in heaven by and through our genuine discipleship to His own dear Son. And God's own Word will account for our high privileges, and explain it all in one short sentence—and a precious sentence too, with which I will now conclude, as one addressed to every true disciple of the Saviour, "From Me is thy fruit found[k]."

[k] Hosea xiv. 8.

SERMON XVI.

CHRIST PROMISING THE HOLY GHOST.

JOHN XVI. (part of 13th verse.)

When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.

THESE words are taken from that most loving and comforting address which our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples on the evening of that night when He was betrayed, and taken prisoner, that on the next day He might be crucified. Sorrow had filled their hearts (as was indeed much to be expected) when they heard from their Master's lips that He was soon to leave them. Jesus accordingly strengthens their fainting spirits, by telling them the benefits—the unspeakable benefits—which would come to them through His departure: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." Thus we may see and note who the grand, living, Almighty source of consolation to Christ's church and people was to be,

when their beloved Lord was no longer to be with them personally. And not only does the Lord make this glorious promise (which was accomplished on the day of Pentecost) in general terms, but He adds many and most important details as to what the Holy Ghost would do, at His mighty coming, and as to the means which He would adopt to be the great Comforter. For instance, Jesus foretells how the Holy Spirit would break up and melt the stony heart with a saving conviction of sin—how He would shew to every child of God that true justifying righteousness was all to be found in Jesus, and in Him only; how he would prove that the "prince of this world"—i. e. Satan, the enemy of souls, was "judged," condemned, and dethroned from his princely seat—how He should "take of the things" of Jesus and present them, as objects of faith, to all believers—how He should thus glorify the Saviour, while conveying such inestimable blessings to all the members of His saved church. Among these works which the Holy Spirit should accomplish—among His offices in the Divine plan for the salvation of souls—among the signs of His wisdom and His might was this; "He shall guide you into all truth."

These words of the text may be fitly considered under two leading heads—truth felt within us, and truth outwardly shewn. Therefore I shall first endeavour to demonstrate how the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth within—felt and experienced within. And here we need only be re-

minded that a man's heart and mind must be occupied by the truth before it can possibly appear in his words and deeds. David thus writes: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name." The Lord "looketh on the heart." "Out of the heart are the issues of life." God saith, "My son, give Me thine heart." All true and acceptable service to God, in a word, all true religion, must have its place first established and made within us. Remember, I do not say that it is to extend no further, or that any Christian ought to be satisfied without the open demonstration of his feelings towards God, without an open confession of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what I do say is, that we must first be guided unto truth within before we can exhibit any such truth rightly, or in conversation and deed. Now it is not a new saying, but a most important fact, that in what is called religion there are thousands of errors and countless wrong ways of worship and attempted service, but only one right way. Neither, by any imaginable possibility, can opposing systems be both true. The idolatry or polytheism of the ancient heathens, their adoration of Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Minerva, and other false gods without number, cannot stand at the same time with the truth of Scripture, wherein God saith, "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt worship none other gods but Me." If Mahomet were God's chosen Messenger, and were his words any thing better than lies and imposture, Jesus could not be the Saviour of

men. If the ritual and ceremonial law of the Jews were still binding on us, Christ could not be to us the "very Paschal Lamb," "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." I might illustrate in many similar ways how it is impossible for two varying systems to be one in any man's heart; and all other doctrine put side by side with the Gospel of Christ, is found untenable with it, for salvation. Most rightly therefore does the Eighteenth Article of our church condemn those who, quite irrationally and unscripturally, "presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved." Since our fall through sin, nothing has more glaringly shewn the corruption of man than the multitude of false religions and "abominable idolatries," even still prevalent in so large a part of the world. And you might as well say that darkness could make darkness light—you might as well say that the blackest and gloomiest cavern in the heart of the earth could produce for itself the radiant sunlight of day, as maintain that man, with his "foolish heart" darkened by sin, could produce and follow that truth which would restore him to the light of heaven, and lead him into glory. Applying what St. John saith, in his first chapter, darkness cannot comprehend or give birth to

light. The light must shine in darkness, and so dispel it.

Again, it is untrue to say that in all religions there is something good—something which may be selected by intelligent minds, and mixed up, as acceptable service to God, with other truths, gathered out of other religious professions. "God is not mocked." God will not admit any such proud, self-conceited theology. All revealed truth is from Him; and no such truth is in the hands of man, independently of Him. Scripture declares of us all, when without the knowledge of His revealed will: "All we, like sheep, have gone astray." "There is none righteous; no, not one: there is none that understandeth"—"they are all gone out of the way." No exception, you observe, either for Jew or for Gentile: for St. Paul, when quoting this psalm, is proving that all, in heart and in practice, are ignorant of God's truth. And how all history of past times, and all knowledge of present times, (as learned from the dreadful state of heathen nations even now,) combines to prove and illustrate this fact! Oh! that more among men would learn and realize with any thing like adequate force, with any approach to the positive and sure state of the case, that God's "thoughts are not our thoughts, that His ways are not our ways, that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts higher than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways!" Oh! that more men would be convinced, that, as to making or finding, by their own wisdom, any re-

demption for their souls, they must let that alone for ever, and must take the redemption already provided in Christ. Oh! that more would virtually cease to say: "I will ascend into heaven" —"I will be a God unto myself"—"I will guide myself into all truth"—and listen to the teaching of Him, even the abiding Spirit testifying unto Christ, by them to be received: for the call of the Spirit is: "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that, if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved[a]."

These things being all sure and true, how thankful should we be that Jesus Christ our Lord undertook to send from heaven that Holy Spirit, who alone can take of the things of Christ, and testify of them unto our spirit! When He first visits us, He invariably finds us quite lost and wandering—alienated from God through the ignorance within us; and this is the case, whether we be converted in our early childhood, or whether we reach maturity of years before we are brought under God's effectual grace. I speak of those who are now, through mercy and grace, the true servants of Christ, and I need not hesitate to say that many of them well remember the days when God was not in their thoughts, as now shewn to them—when they were careless of, if not opposed to true, vital religion; and, so far

[a] Romans x. 8, 9.

as they employed their thoughts on the subject of religion at all, were in total error about God, and about the people of God, and about the way to be saved — and indeed about every subject connected with divine things. To exemplify what I say. They then looked upon God as a severe judge. Now they regard Him as a most loving Father. They then held persons, who were strict, holy, and separate from the world, as inferior in wisdom and good sense to those who lived like other people. Now they know and understand them rightly. Now they prize their superiority, love them as brethren, hold with them all true communion, as opportunity occurs; and seek to follow their steps as they follow Christ. They then thought that they were to be saved by their own freedom from wicked acts and by their performance of what they esteemed good acts. Now they believe and are sure that it is Christ alone by whom "we obtain remission of our sins and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven." These things are but a small sample of the errors which cloud and obscure man's unenlightened mind. These are but a sample of the many—the countless proofs that we need to be changed within by the Spirit of God, and to have our mind guided into all truth out of the false opinions prevalent in our minds. Neither is our heart, with its affections, in a more favourable state than our mind, till it is savingly taught and impressed by the Spirit of God. Sin rules and sways it hither and thither

as a reed shaken by the wind. The heart is occupied by feelings quite inconsistent with the Gospel of Christ. It loves sin, but does not love holiness. It loves the seen and the secular, but not the unseen and the eternal. It is cold on things whereupon it ought to be warm and zealous—but excited, zealous, and alive on things whereupon it ought to be indifferent. In a word, its pulse is false and untrue before Almighty God, and needs to be rectified. It needs the Spirit of God, that He who guides the views and opinions of the mind into all truth, may accomplish the same mighty work as to the feelings of the heart. And if it be so, if it be thus certain and sure that all our inward faculties are, by nature, corrupted, perverted, clouded over, and darkened by sin—if we, by nature, are in a very labyrinth of paths leading to destruction, but not one of them leading to God and salvation — no, not one — if God must be served in spirit and truth, and He will have those only to worship Him, who (according to the word of the Lord Jesus Himself) "do worship Him in spirit and in truth;" then what cause we have to bless and adore that gracious Saviour, who, among the countless blessings which He obtained for us through His sufferings, merits, and righteousness, has won for us the "promise of the Father"—even the Holy Ghost, to guide His people unto the knowledge and unto the experience of God's truth within. Accordingly, no truth, needful for them, and good for them to know, is unknown to the children of

God. They are made wise within, even unto salvation. They may be poor, and naturally slow of comprehension, little or not at all gifted with that knowledge in which the world vaunts itself and delights; but, if true disciples of Christ, the entrance of God's Word, in the hand of the Spirit, gives them that light and understanding in spiritual things which no mere human intellect by thousands of years of labour could obtain. Or, to take another class—men may be gifted with rare and brilliant abilities. They may be furnished with human learning of all kinds, but if they are genuine disciples of Christ, they do and will most readily cast all such attainments at the feet of Christ, imploring Him to sanctify and bless them to His glory: and, like Paul, they shrink not to become "fools," in the opinion of man, that they might be "wise" towards God. And they acknowledge and proclaim with no faltering tongue, that whatsoever they know in Divine and spiritual things has been received from God, and that the Spirit alone has been their guide into truth.

But not only, (as I have pointed out,) not only does the Holy Spirit guide the people of God into all truth within. He also guides them into all truth, as outwardly shewn, in their walk and demeanour before their fellow-men.

And, first, as to conversation.

What a contrast there is between the conversation held by the people, who are thronging the broad road, and that held by those travelling, as

pilgrims and strangers, in the narrow way which leads to everlasting life! Now just let us take one characteristic of this difference or contrast, passing by many others, and fixing our notice on that, which most closely touches our subject. Let us notice the untruth which marks and colours the language of the world! If the children of this world speak of God, they speak of Him untruly. Some speak of Him as if He was "a God afar off," who did not concern Himself with the affairs of man, and as if it would demean Him to order all things on earth, hourly and daily, by the intervention of His rule and governance. What error and untruth they thus pour forth from their lips! Others speak of God as if He would not fulfil His infallible Word—as if He would clear the guilty without true repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, when He has positively declared that He will not do so—as if hell and future punishment for sin committed was all a phantom, a dream, a nonentity. Others are ready and quick to employ their tongues in throwing false ridicule on all religious earnestness, on all zeal and genuine concern for our own souls and the souls of our fellow-creatures. They give lying names to the very chief graces, with which God endows all His true servants. They call them proud, hypocritical, exclusive, meddling, fanatical, uncharitable, and indulge in all sorts of untruth as to their principles, and as to their practices: and in all this they do nothing less than "utter error

against the Lord," (as Isaiah speaks,) and (as St. James saith) they use their tongue as "an unruly member," instrumental to a "world of iniquity," "full of deadly poison," moved by the "Father of lies," and "set on fire of hell," as Scripture strongly tells.

Thus much as to the untruth marking the ordinary conversation of the world when religion, and that which concerns religion, is the topic of discourse.

Untruth also prevails in worldly conversation on more common things. What flattery of people in their presence! What efforts to delude and to deceive, in order to gain some particular object in view, or, sometimes, merely to be agreeable, though at the expense of truth! What pretensions are heard, so that the speaker may represent himself as worthy to be admired, if not envied, for something which he possesses, or assumes to himself! What vain and empty discourse is heard on all sides, attaching importance and worth to the most trivial things! What a mass of untruth, of error, delusion and vanity, is uttered every day even in this Christian land! And what is the remedy for all this evil—for all this dishonour done to God by the language of the lips—for all this mischief done among men by their mutual interchange of error and untruth in their habitual discourse? Be assured there is no efficacious remedy except this—even that the Spirit should guide them into all truth. Hopeless and helpless is the attempt to point out to

men any other scheme of amendment and redress as to the vain conversation, in which the children of this world consume their precious and most swiftly passing days. But when He undertakes His sanctifying work in this department of our lives, He guides us into all truth in our conversation. He "sets a watch on the door of our lips." He seasons our words with due grace. He makes it our prayer and desire that no evil or unreal sentence should at any time defile our tongue. He preserves us in the exercise of all sincerity, integrity and uprightness in our talk. That which is vain gives place to that which is substantial, and that which is false gives way to that which is true. The "truth as it is in Jesus" being then, of course, the truth dearest to our souls—being the centre and the sum of all our liveliest interest within, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will undoubtedly speak; and thus confessing Christ, in whom all saving truth is contained, we manifest before God, before angels and before men, by our conversation, that in this department of our outward life, God the Holy Spirit is guiding us into all truth.

Lastly, let us consider how the same ever blessed Spirit guides the members of Christ's church into all truth as to their acts and deeds. By our acts and deeds we either prove that we are destitute of truth, or that we are under its good and sanctifying sway. Look at the man who is living a sensual life or giving himself up

to forbidden pleasures! Look at the man seeking money and gain with intense labour, making in property his hope and his confidence! Look at the man, swelling with ambition, making an idol for himself out of popularity, and struggling to advance by all means, whether wrong or right, a few steps higher in the world, ere he departs and is no more seen! Look at the man who devotes his days and nights to study and mental toil, but spares not an hour to the science of salvation or to the labour of the soul that it may enter into everlasting rest! Look at all industrious for earth and this life, but idle for heaven! Look at the multitude of characters—divers though they may be in age, rank, disposition, taste and pursuit one from the other—but who agree in this—in shewing by their acts and deeds to every enlightened and discriminating eye, that the motives and the principles on which they act are not the motives and the principles sanctioned in God's Word, that the rule of their habitual conduct is not drawn from thence: and I would ask any rightly judging person, whether untruth is not embodied and exhibited in all their ways, whether they need not a guide out of the midst of their present course into one altogether new, even into all truth, to be manifested in their lives. Now this is no far-fetched and fanciful idea, as some perhaps may suppose. We find our Lord Jesus speaking thus: "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds

may be made manifest that they are wrought in God[b]." Again, it is written in the Epistle of St. John: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." There is then, as you see, such a thing as doing the truth, no less than thinking the truth, and no less than speaking the truth. And verily, in order that our life may be one holy series of truthful acts and deeds, we have need of the Spirit to guide us into all truth, and to keep us in the practical exercise of truth. Nor shall we lack His gracious and mighty help, if under grace, if numbered among those who live a life of faith in Jesus the Son of God. For then neither sensual pleasure, nor the love of money, nor inordinate ambition, nor seductive idleness, nor unsanctified pursuits of any kind whatever, nor any other delusions of the world, or the flesh or the devil, shall any more habitually mark our life. Then we shall no longer give the lie to God and His Word by our acts and deeds in doing untruth. No, but on the contrary, being made by the Spirit followers of Jesus Christ, who is the way, the life and the truth, embodying the "truth as it is in Jesus" in our own lives, and being made "living epistles, known and read of all men" as inscribed with the character and spirit of God's holy and most truthful Word, we shall thus set the seal of our living, active and personal testimony to the fact that God and His Word are true. We shall manifest,

[b] John iii. 21.

each for himself, that the Word of God is not to us a mere "dead letter," but a Word of power and of life. We shall shew that we have been brought unto true repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall shew that we have been changed — yes, "created again in Christ Jesus unto good works." We shall shew that God's glory is the aim and object in which, above all things, we are heartily concerned. We shall shew that we love our Saviour by honouring Him, as our "all in all," and walking in His blessed steps. We shall shew that we love our brethren in Christ, and all our fellow-creatures. And while we thus act, with consistency, integrity, and perseverance — while we thus shew that our acts agree with our conversation, as we shew the agreement of our conversation with the doctrine which we hold inwardly — then it is evident before God, and before all heavenly witnesses, and before men, that in us, both within and without, the promise of the Lord Jesus has been assuredly fulfilled, when He said of the Holy Ghost, "He shall guide you into all truth." Yes, into all truth! Mark the force of that word *into!* Not to its borders alone, but into it — into the very midst of it — so that we may walk in a very atmosphere of truth—so that on all sides it may encircle us, and be our defence on the right and on the left, before and behind, guarding us and girding us all round. Thus, thus we shall be safe. And thus furnished —thus armed with truth, we shall be prepared,

even in this world, where Satan has his seat, the father of all lies and delusions — we shall be prepared, I say, to fight the battles of the God of all truth, and to bear our daily testimony in the sight of God and in the sight of man, that we belong to Him, and honour and glorify Him who is faithful and true, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XVII.

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR UNITY AND ITS FRUIT.

JOHN XVII. 20, 21.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.

THE prayers of Jesus Christ, in behalf of His church or people, may be said to contain, in a brief compass, all their future history, in that particular thing about which He prayed. And why? Because whatever He prayed for was quite sure to be fulfilled in every respect. God always heard—always answered Him.

Again, the history of Christ's church or people, in any matter about which He prayed, reflects or throws back experimental light on the meaning and extent of His prayer. And why, I ask again? Because this history must be the actual and the practical fulfilment of all our Saviour's desire, as expressed in prayer or His intercession with God.

Let us now apply these considerations; and led by the principle which I have just stated, let us, first, observe what Jesus asked in the passage chosen for the text. And, secondly, how the subsequent history of His true people or church has, in reality, exemplified that which He prayed for on their account. And may the Holy Spirit guide, instruct, and bless us, while we proceed on this most delightful subject—the intercession of Jesus on behalf of His church or people. The passage thus begins: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word."

Jesus had just been pleading for His own disciples, with whom He had lived, dwelt, and associated during the days of His sojourn among them. They were a beloved portion of His true universal family, which He was to gather, "at sundry times and in divers places," from among all the families of man, unto whom His Gospel should come. They, like all others who have been, are, or shall be saved, were given to Him by the Father. They received his Word. They believed that the Father had sent Him. And Jesus now had discriminately prayed for them, omitting, at this time, all mention of the world, and centering His thoughts, affections, and petitions on them specially: "I pray for them," saith He, in the ninth verse: "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me." Again: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may

be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name. Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled." And the Saviour prays for them that they might have His joy fulfilled in them—that they might be kept from Satan, or the evil one; and lastly, that they might be sanctified through the truth, as declared in God's holy Word. Such is the nature of those supplications which Jesus made, as the great Intercessor with the Father in heaven, for His disciples, whom He had known in the flesh, who had known Him, and whom He was now just about to leave.

But hear Him as He proceeds! Hear Him enlarging, multiplying, stretching forth the benefit of His prayers unto the end of time, and for all who should hereafter and in all places believe in His name. They were all in His gaze. They were all in His heart. They were all on His lips: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them which shall believe on Me through their word." He knew the power of that word. He knew that His Gospel would be preached "among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." He knew that it would not be spoken in vain. He knew that the weakness of His instruments, their low degree, and their small number at the time, would be no impediment, no detriment at all to the spread of His Word, and to conversions on every side by that very method. He might have employed angels and principalities to carry on His

work, and to form His church among men by their ministrations. But He would act otherwise. He would employ and honour the agency of man for man. He would make each saved man a blessing to other saved men, thus amplifying, thus making up that multitude which could not be numbered. Yes, knowing to the uttermost what His Word should and would accomplish, He prays for all those who, at any time, should believe on Him through the word spoken and handed down by His chosen witnesses. The seed of the Gospel would be ever taking root, and ever bearing fruit. And, God be praised, in that fresh body, now introduced and mentioned in our Saviour's prayer, we ourselves, who believe in Him, were all included. Marvellous thought, but literally, absolutely, undeniably true!

Let us now observe the nature and the character of that petition which Jesus here makes for all these members of His church. It is divided into two parts—first, concerning them as a body—secondly, concerning the result of their conduct, as affecting the world at large. First, Jesus prays "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." And to this He adds, as another and distinct purpose and intent, "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

Our Saviour here prays for unity among His people—for unity too of the very closest and most holy kind, even resembling that between the Father and the Son of His love. And what

does this unity mean? In what does it consist? When is it exemplified in us? It is imperative for us to know these things. But let us first see what unity does not mean; for grievous and fatal results have arisen from a grand mistake on this very subject, and are rising and spreading still. It does not mean mere outward uniformity —a mere similarity in the professing church, as to ceremony, service, and rites in the house of God. It does not mean submission to the dictates of one earthly conclave, or one earthly person, like the bishop of Rome—claiming authority which none may dispute, and setting up himself as infallible in religious things. It does not mean the mere agreement of the lips in the profession of the one same doctrine, or in the recitation of one and the same creed. No, far otherwise! That unity which Jesus here asks in behalf of His church is a very different thing. It is a far better, far holier thing. Man can do that which I have just described. Uniformity like that would need no petition from the Saviour's lips. But, on the contrary, God alone could accomplish that which I am now going to describe. And it befits indeed the Saviour's own and all prevailing prayer!

The unity of our text is unity of spirit, unity of heart, unity of faith within, and unity of life without, as felt, experienced, and exhibited among true believers in Christ throughout the wide world. In Solomon's Song Jesus mystically speaks of His church: "My dove, my undefiled

is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her[a]." Of this unity St. Paul speaks when he exhorts the church at Ephesus to walk worthily of its vocation, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And again the apostle tells what this unity is, though without employing the exact word, in the twelfth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, verse twelve: "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Hereby St. Paul is just embodying and filling out the prayer of Jesus in our text. That prayer contains His purpose and desire, that as there is one Lord, and not "lords many," so there should be one, not many faiths—one baptism, in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not many baptisms in many other names—one life of His people, even a life of holiness and righteousness under the guidance and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Such, briefly, was the subject of this intercessory prayer, on which we are dwelling now, as specially concerning all Christ's people who were yet to come—His yet unborn seed.

But this is not all. The glory of God was our Saviour's constant aim. The world too, with all

[a] Canticles vi. 9.

its unbelief and need of conversion, was not forgotten by Him. Therefore, to the prayer for His church that it may be one, He adds a reason of a special kind—not the sole reason, of course, but a reason still for this unity of spirit being made evident to men. Addressing the Father, he declares His desire and will for the unity of His people, in order "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Oh! how requisite this petition was! Eighteen hundred years have proved its necessity. And He, who, as God, knew man's heart, because He was its Maker, with all its feelings and susceptibilities—He who knew man's heart by experience—by His own personal sympathy, as man—He who knew what would not convince, impress, or attract, and, on the other side, what would—He prayed not here that the zeal of His church should impress the world—no, nor its labours—no, nor its persuasions and words and profession—but that their unity might cause these results, both for the glory of God, and for the rescue of souls, drawn out of that very world, and into the kingdom of God.

Such appears to me the meaning, the course, and the purport of our text, as it came from the heart and lips of our Saviour.

It remains for us, secondly, to note how God the Father has answered this prayer of mediation—how it has been fulfilled in the church's history from the time of its utterance until our own day.

And here we must remember, that nothing,

with which man has to do, and in which he has any active concern, is as yet perfect. We shall soon be staggered and perplexed if we either forget or omit to apply this principle. Perfect and complete unity does not yet exist in Christ's church, nor ever yet has it existed in any branch of it. We must wait for the coming of Christ to accomplish this mighty end. To feel, or to act, as if this was to be expected now, is an unscriptural thing. It is a great error and delusion, which a full knowledge of the Scripture would dissipate, and which, if not dissipated, leads people into very much disquietude, and, oftentimes, to groundless separation from that branch of the church to which they had belonged and rightly might belong still. Nevertheless, admitting all this, the prayer of Jesus has been fulfilled. All Christ's people are one in the grand and essential things which form the Christian. Let experience speak! Let the experience of the church testify to this matter! It may do so out of every parish, where the Gospel is proclaimed, in every family which its power has reached, in every land where the missionary's voice has been heard, in every age and generation, since Jesus prayed that His people might be one. Let none rob you of this conviction! Let none shake you in it! Take the man of the very highest intellectual capacity, and place by his side the savage of the wilderness. Take the aged one and place by his side a mere child in years. Take the mightiest king and take the

poorest subject of his realm. Take the refined and careful moralist, and take the most daring and dissolute rebel against human and Divine laws. Let all these characters become servants of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit! Let them be converted by the Gospel, (as many of each class, which they represent, have been,) and you will have them all in harmony and unity—all one (to use the Saviour's word) on those grand and distinguishing things which the Gospel inculcates, as matters of faith, or which the Gospel claims, as matters of conduct and life. All, for instance, will assuredly know God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All will know themselves as fallen creatures, as sinners guilty in the sight of God. All will feel, that, had it not been for redemption by Jesus Christ, they too must have perished eternally. All will feel their need of the Spirit's help. All will know that they have to encounter mighty spiritual foes. All will seek to please God in all things, and to serve and to glorify that blessed Saviour unto whom all their salvation is due. All will be able to hold fellowship with one another on spiritual things, as opportunity occurs. Yes, I repeat, without hesitation, all in spirit and in conduct will be *one*, as our Saviour prayed they should be, and therefore as they must be. I speak not here of things in which they may differ. These, though not slight or indifferent in themselves, are very slight and indifferent indeed when compared with those things in which unity

is theirs, in doctrine and in practice too. The "children of this world" will ever make much of any dissensions and any disagreements among the zealous and true followers of Christ. They will note them gladly. They will point them out with eagerness, and magnify them to the uttermost — blind all the time, or assuming to be blind, as to their unity. We often see this in the present day. And all this must be expected and met. But, besides this, the true members of Christ's church are often, it appears to me, far too blind to their own points of union and of harmony, and too keen on their points of difference: but, after all, the real wonder is, that, in a sytem, at the same time so lofty in doctrine, and so opposed to our corrupt nature, and so practical in all its details for the regulation of daily and hourly life — the wonder, I say, is, not that some differences should exist, but, that there should be such unity of spirit and such unity of life, as there actually is in the true church of Christ— that is, in those who believe in Him, from the heart, throughout the wide world. This is the real wonder. Yea! more. This is unaccountable. Yea! more. This would be impossible, except as effected by Divine power and grace, bringing the human heart, of every aspect and form, into subjection to itself; and were it not for His work and for His prayer, who prayed that all might be one, who should believe in Him.

It only remains that we should observe too how the unity of Christ's people affects the world

at large. We know from this prayer that it must have this result. Our part therefore is not to find this out, far less to question it, but merely to observe it. And, truly, if our eyes are open, we cannot fail so to do. Perhaps you may have seen how angry and excited the children of this world are, when first they remark any one, of their own company or set, adopting any one view or any one practice of a holy kind. What a clamour is made! What ridicule is wakened up! What an anxiety is shewn to check or retard the course of piety in that soul! Now why is this? Not because of that single view or of that single practice alone, but because it is held as a part of a system—as a token or sign of a complete change —as an evidence of no mean kind that their relative, or friend, or neighbour, or acquaintance is leaving the world, and soon will be lost to it. And very right are their conclusions, though people act very wrongly upon them. But all this proves how there is a unity in the acts and deeds, as well as in the doctrine and faith, of the true servants of Christ. To this the world is by no means blind. It cannot help seeing it, sometimes to its fresh condemnation, and sometimes, thank God, to the rescue and welfare of some among its votaries. Yes! these things to some are the "savour of death unto death." To others they are the "savour of life unto life." Some, on seeing the unity of Christ's people, will only be made more bitter against them, more determined in their opposition, more filled with enmity to-

wards the Gospel of Christ. But with others it will not be so. They will be convinced, impressed and softened by what they see among the children of God. They will be brought, it may be slowly, or, it may be speedily, to recognise their principles, as proceeding from God, and to adopt them themselves, and to cast in with them their happy lot. Such things have been. Such things are. Such things shall be. And in every instance like this, the double prayer of Jesus is graciously fulfilled — first, that all His people may be one—and, secondly, "that the world may believe how the Father sent Him" to be the Saviour of man. God grant that we may more and more shew ourselves the true followers of Christ! May we shew ourselves to be one with all His saints in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace! Thus will be fulfilled in us the prayer and petition of our Lord Jesus Christ; and thus we shall have our honourable part in so shining and living before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven; and thus we shall advance the truth as it is in Jesus, that the world may believe that God hath sent Him!

SERMON XVIII.

JESUS OUR PRESERVER AS TO BODY AND SOUL.

JOHN XVIII. 9.

Of them which Thou gavest me have I lost none.

THE portion of Scripture in which these words appear, tells of Jesus being taken prisoner in the garden of Gethsemane. The chief priests and Pharisees had successfully plotted against Him. Judas, having betrayed Him, had led a band of men "with lanterns, and torches, and weapons," in order to take Him. And now Jesus, knowing that His hour was come—knowing all the sufferings, maltreatment, and indignities, so soon to gather around Him, went forth to meet His enemies, as a willing victim—"went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He." But there was in His bearing and His words such dignity and majesty, perhaps attended with a special putting forth of His own Divine power, that, "as He said unto them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground." And thus was literally fulfilled the prophetic

language of the Psalms, "When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me, to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell[a]." Or, as it is written again in another Psalm, "Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt[b]." Which act of power and of majesty, as shewn in the person of the Lord Jesus, seems to have been done, just at this special season, in order to give a fresh and convincing proof, that He surrendered Himself into the hands of the wicked, whom He might have consumed in an instant—that He gave Himself up, of His own free will and marvellous love, to all His sufferings—that His power was almighty still, though (as Isaiah foretold) just about to give "His back to the smiters," and His "cheeks to them that plucked off the hair," and to "hide not His face from shame and spitting[c]." But to return to the history. Jesus "then asked them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none[d]"—a reference being here made, through the Holy Ghost, to a particular verse in our Lord's blessed prayer of intercession for His people of that time and of all times, contained in the seventeenth chapter of this Gospel. See the twelfth verse, where Jesus,

[a] Ps. xxvii. 2. [b] Ps. xxxv. 4. [c] Isaiah l. 6. [d] John xviii. 6, &c.

addressing the Father, sayeth of His servants; "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

Thus is the text introduced. Let us, with earnest desire and with prayer for the Spirit, first, observe the full meaning of our Saviour's words, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

Secondly, its fulfilment, not only in His servants, who lived at the time when He made this declaration, but in all His people, of all times and climes — in all the members of His saved church, redeemed by His blood, sanctified by the Spirit, and to be glorified in heaven, both as to their bodies and as to their souls for ever.

First, then, as to the full meaning of the words — "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

A man is composed of a body and of a soul — both precious to Him — both capable of the utmost imaginable misery, as well as of the utmost imaginable joy — both needful for the service of God here, and both indispensable for the perfection of his nature hereafter. Therefore it is evident that any saying, such as that before us, includes the preservation of a man, both as to his body and as to his soul, for this present world and for the coming eternity. When the Lord Jesus affirms that He has not lost, or will

not lose, any one of His people, what a vast amount of invaluable truth, for our confidence, encouragement, joy, and gratitude appears! It tells us that He keeps them safe, in this present life, from all danger to their bodies, whatsoever it might be, which would put an end to their course on the earth before their work was done, or before the very best moment had arrived for them to depart in peace—their Saviour's glory held in view, and also their own everlasting blessedness. Till that moment arrives, the principle of life, in the servant of God, is like that of an immortal. Till that moment comes, it is deathless. It cannot be injured, interfered with, or touched. Their enemies may rage against them, and seek their extermination. But it will be all in vain. A Saul may seek David's life in every treacherous or violent way, by his own javelin, or by armies of men, by night or by day, but David will remain unhurt, for he is to have the kingdom. A Nebuchadnezzar may cast the three faithful Jews into the burning fiery furnace; but it will neither consume them, nor even singe them, for One like the Son of God is with them in the midst of the fire, rendering its furious flames all gentle and harmless around them as the very breeze of spring. An Herod may cast a Peter into prison, and fasten him to two soldiers with two chains, for additional security; but God will hear the supplication of His friends. The angel of the Lord will cause the chains to fall off; and make the prison gate open of itself be-

fore him; and restore him to the fellow-believers of his company; and save him altogether from the malice of the proud ruler, who would have slain him on the ensuing day, to vex and weaken Christ's infant church and please its adversaries.

We are specially told that our Lord Jesus Christ acted in the same spirit, and with the same purpose, as "Preserver" of His people concerning their bodily lives, at that moment of His history, presented to us by the text. I have already called attention to the circumstances—the exact circumstances, to which that His saying is applied. He provided for their safety at the very moment when He Himself was just to be taken prisoner, and subjected (as He so perfectly knew) to unspeakable agonies, maltreatment, and death. "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end." They were to be His witnesses on earth. As God the Father had sent Him into the world, so He was sending them, that they might accomplish His work, shine as lights in the dark abode of unconverted men, lay up treasure in heaven for themselves, and be the honoured means of bringing multitudes to glory through their proclamation of that Gospel by which they were themselves saved. And thus it was, of course, fulfilled. What was their subsequent history? No doubt a history of perils, but a history of preservations too. A history of marvellous predicaments, but a history of most marvellous deliverances. Soon they had to meet in secret "for fear of the Jews," lest their own

countrymen should be their destruction. A few days passed; and then they set themselves, openly and publicly, to establish the religion of their crucified Lord—preaching boldly and faithfully to the assembled multitude, how "God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ." Soon they began to work miracles in His holy name, and fearlessly told through whose name the miraculous deeds were done. And they were threatened. They were imprisoned. They had to endure all the enmity and all the violence of their exasperated foes, "in perils oft," with death, to all appearance, hanging over them at every moment, at every preaching, and at every deed in their Master's cause. Still, however, they were safe. The banner of the Lord, though man's eye saw it not, ever waved over them. This inscription was on it: "Do My prophets no harm." Accordingly, till the appointed time came for Herod to kill a James with the sword, or for a Peter to glorify God in his death, (as Jesus had announced to him,) or for the other apostles and disciples to pass away from this world and to enter into their rest, they were kept by the mighty Lord. Their bodies were as safe as the life of an angel in heaven. Death of no sort whatever could have dominion over them; for as on earth Jesus had said at the hour of His own capture, "Let these go their way," and had provided for their bodily security, so the same Jesus in heaven preserved them in the world till their hour arrived; and

having prayed to God, "not that He should take them out of the world, but that He should keep them from the evil," therefore, as to their bodies, He could say, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

The Lord Jesus is the same still. His power and love to His people is just the same still. He changeth not. I might fill a sermon with passages to prove that their bodies are safe in His hands. But what we want is, not to be convinced of this, but to feel it more—to realize it more—to repose more on this truth, both for ourselves and for others whom we love, and for whom we feel. Satan, do doubt, is constantly seeking and devising how he may compass the bodily destruction of the true servants of Christ, who "live a life of faith in the Son of God," and shine as lights in the world, and glorify their Master, and forward "the truth as it is in Jesus," to their children, and to their fellow-creatures, near or far off. But the Lord protects them. Therefore they are safe. Therefore in patience they may "possess their souls," and never be terrified. Therefore they may carry on their various engagements of life, and meet any danger, lying in the path of duty, without apprehension or fear. If called to the bed of contagion, they may attend and comfort the sufferer without the smallest alarm. If called, as the missionary, over the seas, and into the regions of fierce heathen tribes, they may go forth in the sense and experience of the most perfect security: or should wickedness

abound at home, and the enemies of Christ's Gospel have for a time their unbridled will, and set up the most furious persecution in the land, their bodily lives (in one sense) can never be lost; for how can that be called "lost" which must be preserved until the work of its owner shall have been accomplished, and not till then taken from him by any possible or any imaginable means? Surely, in this sense, we may abundantly rejoice in that exceeding privilege which Jesus made ours by His declaration before God the Father, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

But now to enter on a still more precious truth — on a truth of far, far higher consequence. Undoubtedly, that bodily security which Christ's servants enjoy under His most mighty protection arises from the fact, that they have been given unto Him by God the Father as the subjects of redeeming grace, as those who should be saved through His blood, His merits, and His righteousness. And on this matter — on all the saved being the gift of God the Father to the Son, I shall speak presently. But before so doing, we have to consider that declaration of the Lord, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none," as concerning the soul of the true Christian, as to the security of his spiritual life and blessedness unto all eternity.

Now, surely, if Satan would maliciously compass and attempt (as undoubtedly he does) the bodily destruction of the true servants of Christ,

how much more eagerly, how much more determinately will he lay wait against their spiritual life, and seek its destruction! So too, and exactly after his example, will be the spirit and design of ungodly men—of the determined enemies of Christ, of His Gospel, and of His people. If Satan and evil men would rejoice at having removed from among them such as reprove their irreligion and iniquity by their words, or by the still more cogent example of their holy lives, still more would they rejoice if they could seduce them away from their Lord, lead them to deny their Master, and make an alliance with them in their irreligion and worldliness. I know nothing whatsoever on which Satan and ungodly men have ever triumphed or do triumph more, than in the sins or the manifest fall of one who seemed to be a true servant of God. And oh! how many would thus fall and finally perish, under the combined assault of Satan with his spiritual host, of the world with its enemies of Christ in flesh and blood like ourselves, and of their own evil and corrupt hearts, had it not been for the blessed truth, that Jesus never hath lost and never can lose one of the happy multitude of His saved people, some departed in the faith ages ago, some living now in the faith, and some to be born and die in the faith hereafter, so as to make up the full and glorious number of His elect church. Doubt not this truth; for it tends to the glory of God and to the Christian's happiness! And hear the Lord Jesus declaring it! "My sheep shall

never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of My hand[d]." The original Greek is stronger than our translation. Our's is "any man." The original is "any one"—including man, or evil spirit, or any creature whatsoever in existence. See also the end of the eighth chapter of the Romans: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us" (us, i. e. all true believers) "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And while we find the same great apostle declaring that he "kept his body in subjection, lest, having preached unto others he himself should be a castaway," yet this does not, as some think, prove any uncertainty as to his final salvation; for in the light of Scripture we shall see how the same God who appoints His people to their final glory also appoints them to the means whereby they attain it; and (as we hear in the second chapter of St. Peter's first Epistle, and the second verse) they are elect "unto obedience," as well as "unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" and therefore God works in them as well as for them; and sends them His Spirit, and His Word, and His sacraments, and preachers of the Gospel, and faithful Christian friends, and keeps up within them tenderness of conscience and holiness of life, and an earnest practical concern for the

[d] John x. 28.

glory of their Saviour unto the end of their days. And they live and they die in the sure and effectual use of these appointed means. And, finally, they enter into that everlasting felicity which Jesus has obtained for them through His precious blood. And thus God is glorified concerning them, both as to the means and as to the end. And thus their safety and happiness is made secure for them both in earth and in heaven. And thus is and shall be fulfilled that very word which the Lord Jesus spake, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

But why all these privileges? Why all this security? Why all this provision for our present peace with God? Why all these rich and sure anticipations of glory, which shall never make us ashamed of our hope? Why all this eternal felicity, assured and secured by the very word of a faithful God to poor, sinful, fallen creatures like ourselves? These things cannot be ours through any merit of our own — through any thing in our own characters, so as to obtain them for our own sakes from that pure and holy God who charges the angels themselves with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not clean—or through any works of righteousness which we have done, are doing now, or intend to do hereafter. No, but all are ours for Christ's sake: and the saying of our text gives us the one, grand, undeniable, and conclusive reason why we have and shall have all those blessings and privileges, which, I trust, have now been

awakening our praise and gratitude. True Christians are the living gift, bestowed by God the Father Almighty on His dear Son, that they, being saved by Him, might be for His eternal honour and glory, and that in them He might see the fruit of "the travail of His soul and be satisfied[d]." God the Son was to shew in Himself unto all the intelligent creatures something more than creating love. He was to shew nothing less than redeeming love. For to create is of a word, or of the mere exercise of will, but to redeem was to be by suffering, such as Jesus endured. All souls to be saved were given to Him that He might redeem them: and He did redeem them through suffering, humiliation, and death. The words of our Lord, setting forth this truth, are very frequent indeed. Hear Him speaking in the sixth chapter of St. John, thirty-seventh verse: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Again: "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day[e]." Two passages may be appropriately taken from our Lord's intercessory prayer in the seventeenth chapter of the same Gospel. He there sayeth: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." Again: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom

[d] Isaiah liii. 11. [e] John vi. 39.

Thou hast given Me[f]." And, lastly, in the second chapter of the Hebrews, Jesus appears, presenting all saved souls at the Father's throne, accompanied with these words: "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me."

We all know full well that earthly things are ever intended to teach us about heavenly things. Apply this to the text. We know the value ever set on property and on possessions. We know how, in all ages and in all countries, men value and endeavour to preserve that which is their own—their houses or their lands—their goods or their money, or their property of any kind. It is of value and of worth, because it is their own. But there are still more valuable things than these inanimate possessions. Dear friends and loving relatives—these, for instance, are more precious things, incomparably more precious, to us, than any such possessions as those already told of. Just in the same manner is it that the church of Christ is His valued property—His living possession—the Father's gift unto Him, its one Saviour, its one Mediator. In every way Christ's people are endeared to Him. He loved them from all eternity; and through His infinite love He entered into covenant with God that He would come and die for them, so as to atone for all their sins and guilt, and to bring in for them everlasting righteousness. So, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son,

[f] John xvii. 11.

made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons[g]." And Jesus accomplished this work, suffering for His own, because they were His own. The sheep were His, and therefore He laid down His life for them, which no hireling would have done, (as He Himself expresses it,) none but the Owner, whose the sheep were—to whom they had been given. But not only from a good shepherd, as the guardian of his sheep, not only from a good king, as the guardian of his subjects, and not only from a good parent, as the guardian of his children, but from every possible relationship which human life could supply, may we draw illustrations of our Lord's preserving love exercised towards His church. And were these illustrations all combined together, the likeness even then would be but imperfect and shadowy and faint, as compared with the sure results of our Saviour's power and love and everlasting guardianship, all assured to us in that saying, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

In conclusion, may I not ask whether these remembrances should not awaken in us fresh joy, fresh gratitude to God, and fresh determination to serve the Lord Jesus Christ with "full purpose of heart," manifesting forth our love towards Him who hath so loved us, and our confidence

[g] Galatians iv. 4, 5.

in that everlasting covenant, of which all sacred souls shall be the living and the everlasting seals? Having these promises, and strengthened by these assurances, let us act as the apostle exhorts us, "and cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Let us live and walk worthily of those high privileges which we have this day considered! Thus you will live holily, and thus you will live happily. Thus by your words you will win others to the same Lord, whom you have found so joyfully for yourselves. And you, by your example, will do the same. Rejoicing yourselves in the Lord, you will lead others to rejoice with you too, and thus to honour Him, with you, in that way wherewith He delights to be honoured! Oh! let this be our honoured course, and then to us a life indeed will be true liberty. How blessed such a life nothing shall so strongly prove as the great coming day, when all those who have lived without Christ in this present world, however successfully, and however to their hearts' content, and to the envy of many, shall find indeed that they had never lived at all for any purpose except woe and death. Oh! remembering this, let us make it our business, aim, and delight to glorify in all our conduct that blessed Saviour, unto whom we have the unspeakable honour to belong, as His own redeemed people! And may we (as Scripture tells) "be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be re-

vealed in the last time[h]," so as to appear ourselves, at the Lord's return, of that glorious company, in whom this word shall be to the uttermost fulfilled: "Of them whom Thou gavest Me have I lost none."

[h] 1 Peter i. 5.

SERMON XIX.

JESUS BIDDING HIS CHURCH WAIT AND WATCH.

MARK XIII. 34—37.

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

JUST at the termination of our Lord's ministry, and only a few days before his crucifixion, His disciples took an opportunity of drawing His attention to the outward fabric of the temple at Jerusalem, and to its magnificence. This is mentioned in all the first three Gospels, with the addition of the very language used. One saith unto Him, "Master, see what manner of stones and what manner of buildings are here[a]!" St. Luke writes,

[a] Mark xiii. 1.

that "as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." He knew that God's own purpose in the creation and maintenance of that temple was now drawing to a close, and that henceforward He Himself was to be One living Temple, unto whom all believing souls should look, and in whom all believing souls should spiritually dwell, and glorify their God for ever. Our Lord then spake forth that prophecy, which has been already, in a measure, fulfilled by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, under the Roman army, forty years after He thus uttered its doom. But much more than this was in that prophecy. For it told of things even now going on, having their fulfilment in the current history of the church, and only to be completed at the return or second coming of Jesus our Lord "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." These are the matters contained in the text; or, rather, to speak more accurately, the subject of it is, first, the position which Jesus now occupies towards all the true members of his church; and, secondly, the position which all its true members either do occupy in respect to Him, or ought to occupy. I shall speak separately on these two points—and may the Holy Spirit guide us, and grant us this day His full blessing!

First, then, what is the position which Jesus,

according to our text, holds or occupies now in respect to His church?

"The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."

Jesus very often sets Himself forth in a similar light—even in that of a great personage departing for a long time, and leaving those under his authority to fulfil their respective duties, in order to prove how they would act under these circumstances. In the twentieth of St Luke's Gospel He speaks this parable: "A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time." So again in the twenty-fifth of Matthew: "The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey." Now all these illustrations, together with that of the nobleman going to the distant seat of government, to be invested with the rule of a province, represent the fact that Jesus our Lord was visibly and personally to depart from this earth and from His church for a long season; and to return again after many days; and then to judge every man according to his works during the time of His absence from the sight of men. This point is essential to all these separate parables.

But each has its own mark and peculiarity, quite distinct from the rest in the mode and manner of its teaching. So with regard to the text. While the idea of an absent master, but one to whom all responsibility still remains due, is the same in each parable, here we have Jesus represented as one who left his house or family, "and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."

Now that the church—I do not mean any one visible body or denomination, but the whole assembly of true believers in Christ—that the church is Christ's household or family, there can be no doubt. It is said expressly so to be. See the third of Hebrews, fifth verse: "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house" (i. e. among the children of Israel, over whom God made him ruler) "as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Many other passages speak of the children of Christ's family; but this of our text deals with His church as servants of His household, in which light, as well as that of children, we all stand before Him; and to this view I shall now confine myself.

Just as the master of some large establishment, when leaving home, would sanction his servants to pursue their own separate duties and works without his daily, visible inspection and commands; so when Jesus ascended into heaven He

gave authority to all His servants, in each successive generation, and in every place, for the fulfilment of His will upon earth. They are to act in His name and for Him. He is their Lord and their Master, who has over them every title and every claim which their creation and their redemption could give: and He is the possessor of all things upon earth, which His servants are to employ and deal with as His. He has a right to their allegiance all unreserved and all undivided; and all things here are Christ's, so that none can rightfully withdraw any one of them from His ownership. If therefore He commits authority to His servants, they are bound to use and employ it for Him. All bodies are His. All minds and intellects are His. All hearts are His. All time is His. All money is His. All rule and government is His. All our relatives and all our friends are His. Life, death, and eternity—all, all are His—and therefore in all things Jesus has authority, and Jesus intrusts that authority to His servants, and they are bound and privileged to use it in their Master's service, and for His glory; and most assuredly He will maintain their cause.

Moreover, we are told that Jesus gives "to every man His work." Yes! this is His distribution unto every member of His church. I need not speak here as to what is the great work and occupation of all who call themselves Christians, but as to what it should be; for it is that with which we, individually and personally, are concerned; and thus it is regarded in the text. "To

every man his work"—as it were in a hive of bees, where all should be workers—where there should be no drones. Idleness is never contemplated as a possible thing among the servants of God. Adam and Eve were to dress and keep the garden. His people have always been called to ample, earnest, persevering work for His name's sake—Noah, for instance, as builder of the ark—Moses, as the leader of His people through the wilderness—David, as a warrior, ruler, and king—His prophets, as rising up early and so late taking rest in fulfilling their high office. So too the apostles—so all the saints, of whom Scripture tells—so Jesus Himself. He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He came, saying, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day. The night cometh, when no man can work." Again: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." Thus He sanctioned by His example that which He ordained and commanded by His Word—"to every man his work." Whether high or whether low in earthly station—whether young or whether old—whether learned or whether otherwise—every one should regard himself or herself as having at all events one grand, primary work on earth; that is, to serve Christ; and this precedes every other calling, though it may be pursued in every calling not absolutely sinful in itself, and therefore demanding that we should leave it one, or so arrange and change things in it that it may become so. The text

teaches all this most explicitly when it tells us how Jesus "gave to every man his work."

But one word more on the last clause in His administration: "He commanded the porter to watch."

This, in all probability, specially refers to the office of His ministers. Elsewhere they are termed watchmen. Here they are told of as keeping the door. And this is their post, which they spiritually fill. If taught by the Spirit of God they will not act as "lords over God's heritage." They will not act harshly with their fellow-servants. They will not shut the door against any one desirous to enter into the family of Christ. Rather, by the preaching of a full, free gospel, they will open it gladly and thankfully at any hour of the day or night to any true pilgrim experiencing his own need of a Saviour, and desirous of being saved. They will act, in the spirit of Good-will the Porter, at the wicket gate in the Pilgrim's Progress, whose word is; "We make no objections against any, notwithstanding all that they have done before they come hither. They in no wise are cast out." But at the same time they will act faithfully. They will not, intentionally, let any single person enter there who has no faith nor trust in their Master. They will so preach the Gospel, and they will so teach privately—and they will so plainly and truly declare the real, true, and only way of salvation, that, so far as in them lies, none of their hearers may be themselves deceived, or deceive others,

by any false pretences or erroneous profession. They will remember who it was that said, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." And in remembrance of this solemn title of their Lord, they, through grace, boldness, and wisdom from above, will keep the door, and constantly affirm to all comers, that, except by faith in Jesus Christ, none shall enter in, so far as they can prevent it. This is the porter's office. This should be the porter's work.

Such then is the standing, position and relationship which, according to His own word and description in the text, Jesus now occupies with regard to His church, and to every one of us who truly belongs to it.

We have, in the second place, to see what is the standing, position and relationship which the Church now occupies—I dwell on the word *now* —with regard to Him.

"Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning."

This evidently is a state of expectation—a state of circumspection—a state of diligent attention to allotted work, under the conviction that at any period our Lord may return personally, and in judgment, to inspect His household, and see how they are employed. Now I believe there are many—indeed I know there are—who have allowed that most unscriptural notion to take

hold of their minds, that it is not needful for ministers to press on them this subject of their Lord's second coming, nor incumbent on them, personally, to feel it, as a motive and a principle for them, individually, to act upon. Now I can only say that such a view as this is most inexcusable, or most irreverend. If it proceeds from ignorance of Scripture, and from inattention to the fact, that a large amount of our Lord's own discourses and a large amount of the apostles' writings are filled with this subject, as a motive, and as a principle, and for a practical bearing on the hearts and in the lives of His people, then this ignorance is most inexcusable. But, on the other hand, if this is known, and yet an indifference to the subject of our Lord's second coming still remains and prevails; and if any one ventures to assert that it is sufficient for us to think, instead, of the day of our death, and of the uncertainty of life, then this course is indeed most irreverent to God and His inspired Word. What! Doth not God know best what we ought to feel, realize, and apply? Shall He make known what He considers most for the glory of His Son, and what is most befitted to sway and actuate us, His creatures, and shall we neglect it? All I shall now say on the subject is, God forbid! And let us proceed to examine the command itself, from which I have gone aside for a few moments, but, I am well assured, not without much need of the caution and warning voice for many every where.

"Watch ye therefore." Elsewhere it is written:

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil"—redeeming it—buying it out, as it were, for higher and for holier purposes than those for which it is spent by the world around. The prophet Habakkuk speaks of himself, as watching what the Lord would say unto him[a]. So again St. Paul orders us: "Watch ye: stand fast in the faith." Again, "Let us watch and be sober." Again, "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments." One more quotation: "Let us not sleep" (i. e. spiritually) "as do others: but let us watch and be sober." Now this watching does not in the least mean a state of excited suspense, such as would disable us from the calm pursuit of our respective duties and responsibilities. Nor has true religion ever that effect, however it may be slandered and libelled and charged with the false, imaginary phantoms of its enemies. Some say, religion makes people mad. Rather are those morally mad who are cold and dead on the subject. Jesus has himself provided against such a state of mind, even when telling His people of the most awful and overwhelming things, which they might have to meet and encounter. His exhortation is: "In your patience possess ye your souls." "Be ye not of a doubtful mind"—in a state of suspense, as it were in the clouds[b]. Nor, again, does this order to watch sanction the proceedings of monks and of monasteries, of nuns and of nun-

[a] Habakkuk ii. 1. [b] Καὶ μὴ μετεωρίζεσθε. Luke xii. 29.

neries, of hermits and of anchorites, of men flying from the scenes and daily transactions of life, and quitting their families, their homes, their callings and duties, under the idea that they will more please God by passing their days in solitude afar off, and in abstract contemplation, uninterrupted from year's end to year's end. Let us be well assured that nothing of this kind — none of these self-invented schemes, which are the delight of the church of Rome — find any sanction either in the text or in any part of God's Word. No doubt Elijah dwelt for a season in the wilderness, but there was a purpose in it: and even to him, in his solitude, God said: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and sent him back to his country and his brethren, whom for a time he had been tempted to shun. No doubt John the Baptist "was in the deserts until the day of his shewing unto Israel," and "was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey." But in that God had His own purpose, and that confined to Him. No doubt the saints of old time, as well as of more recent times[d], have "wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." But this was not their own voluntary course. It was that to which persecution drove them. In the Lord's meaning and intent holy watching needs no course like this—no such expedients. It means that at all times and in all places—as dawns the morning and as evening

[d] Among the Cevennes, for instance, in Louis XIVth's time.

shuts in — in company and when alone — on Sundays and on all days—at our business and at our recreation — in youth, in middle age and old age—in health and strength, in sickness, decay, and in the extremities of death, we should, habitually, seek to keep up in our mind, that, as Jesus our Lord once came to suffer, so too He will again come to be glorified; and we should habitually find it our privilege and our vocation too to live ready for His appearance—ready to open unto Him immediately from the very depths of our own hearts. We should be ready to welcome Him there at His summons, should He come, at any time, to knock at the door of the startled world, with His own Almighty hand, and with the archangel's trump, and with the shout of triumphant myriads from the courts of heaven. This, this is to watch, in the Lord's meaning and intent, as the text tells. We must watch, in spirit, over all our conduct and over all our doings, so that at any time we might be able to present them, either as in progress according to God's will, or as completed in the same manner —deeds sealed and acknowledged by the Spirit— fruit that shall remain — the richness of good works. Just take an illustration from ordinary life! Suppose a manufactory, where many and perhaps some difficult fabrics are in hand. The master may come in at any time, and, very probably, at some unexpected time, to inspect each man's work, and see whether he is performing it carefully and well, or carelessly, and so as not to

bear close investigation. The one is a workman who will, the other who will not be ashamed at his master's approach and eye. So too in the case of servants—that very similitude employed by the Lord here. A master of a great place and broad estate may have to be away for a long period — yes, so long — of which there have been instances—that some of his household may have died in his absence, and their places have been filled up — but the restoration of the master's health, for which he went and dwelt, for a time, in a distant land; or the sudden termination of a far distant war, in which he may have been engaged as a leader and commander in the cause of his country; or his retirement from duties in another place — or some similar thing, may have brought him back speedily, perhaps unexpectedly. And then it will be, that, just as each servant had made it his endeavour that his master should be pleased with his own special department of work at his coming, so will his work, at the time of trial, be found—and whatsoever we may say of a mere positive command effecting such results, still the heart, and the feeling of a real interest is requisite for things to be done well even in common life. Much more in things which relate to the kingdom of God. Jesus, at all events, will not be satisfied and cannot be satisfied on any principle of an inferior kind as to that done for Him. Other motives, of course, have place in due subordination and degree: but this must be the chief and the uppermost, viz. the desire and

the purpose of heart, by God's grace, to manifest in our lives that we do truly love Him, do truly seek His glory in all things, do truly arrange all our ways and doings so as to present ourselves and all concerning us as offerings at His feet, as works done to please Him, as the obligations of holy and devoted love, at any given moment.

It is observable, that, in the language of the text, Jesus especially referred to the four divisions of the night, prevalent among the Jews—the four watches—three hours in each. So too the course of this world is a long and dark night — a night of sorrow, toil, sin, vanity, ignorance, compared with the glory of that everlasting day which shall be ushered in and continued without end by the "Sun of righteousness" — even Jesus Christ at His second coming: but, notwithstanding this, the Scripture thus addresses us, who are enlightened by the Word and the Spirit, and who are the true followers of Christ: "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"— i. e. the careless, the worldly, the deaf to the Gospel, and all who are wilfully ignorant of these things. And now mark that which follows! "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." There is the distinction — God be praised for it! Therefore let us be watching and waiting in spirit and truth for the

return of our coming Lord. He has tarried for a long while. Nevertheless, He will not not tarry for ever — and through the long vista, perhaps of troublous days for ourselves, and perhaps of troublous times in public matters, such as we, as yet, have not had to encounter — and through the valley of the shadow of death—and across the grave, with its darkness, gloom, and corruption, let us look onwards and let us look upwards to the glad sight of our Lord's return in His majesty! And cheered by that sight, present to the spiritual eye that is within us, let us pursue our remaining way holily, blamelessly, cheerfully, and industriously in the Lord's service! Let us go on fulfilling all the daily duties of our life, not merely as chance or our own natural disposition may lead—not merely to pacify or just to satisfy our own conscience — not merely with the endeavour just to escape God's wrath and condemnation, but on those very principles, connected with our Saviour, which He Himself laid down and commended to us, of every age and every generation, when He preached to us not less than to those who heard Him: "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Nor let us be satisfied, without all constant effort on our part to advance the kingdom of Christ in the souls of other men, other women, and other children, without bearing our share, however humble, in that spiritual work, which is more noble, more endearing, and more practical too than all other work which God has given His children to do. For

that which is done on and in the everlasting soul, whether it be our own, or whether it be that of another, by our means and instrumentality, will certainly endure, when the mightiest work of man's hand shall exist no more—when pyramids shall all have crumbled to the dust, and the earth shall have been convulsed to its very centre. Let us remember and apply these things; and waiting for our Lord's return, and watching in all things, carry on that work which He has given us to do, the work of prayer and of praise and of all holiness and righteousness in the strength and by the Spirit of God; and "be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"—and that we shall receive our abundant reward at the hour of His coming in His own majesty!

Oh! may we wait, and watch, and pray,
Look up; and free from fear,
Our life be all devotedness,
Till He, our Lord, appear!

SERMON XX.

CHRIST, THE PRESENT SAVIOUR AND THE FUTURE JUDGE.

MATTHEW XXVI. 64.

Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

THERE never was a greater contrast than that which existed between the humiliating circumstances of Him who spake these words, and the grandeur which He announced for His own at a future period. This grandeur too was to be witnessed by those very persons whom He thus addressed. The Speaker was Jesus—at the time betrayed by one of His disciples, and abandoned by them all. He was taken captive — charged with blasphemy against God—led as a prisoner into the palace of Caiaphas, and standing before His enemies, all bent on His destruction, and seeking false witnesses in order to put Him to death. I repeat that Jesus spoke these words — alone, friendless, helpless — suffering at the time much cruel treatment and indignity, and soon to

suffer more, until the end and consummation of all by His crucifixion and death. He had answered nothing to the charges brought againt Him. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." And why? Because, though in Him was no sin, and He was all innocent and spotless, yet He stood at the time as our representative; and we, being guilty before God, could answer nothing to the charge of our sins. That explains it. Therefore it was that "Jesus held His peace," as it is written in the sixty-third verse. But when "the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

The subject of this sermon will be—the contrast between our Lord Jesus Christ's first coming in humiliation, and His second coming in glory. One has taken place already. The other will take place hereafter. One coming is as certain as the other. It is only a question of time: for as at the exact period which God had appointed for His Son to "visit us in His great humility" Jesus was born at Bethlehem, so too, precisely at the time which God has appointed for His Son to return in His majesty He will appear again; and all will be most assuredly fulfilled connected in Scripture with that day. Let us therefore

look, in faith, to God the Holy Ghost for His blessing and power from on high, while I speak of the chief constrasting marks and distinctions in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, at these two separate, but equally sure appearances—one past, the other yet to come.

First, then, concerning our Lord in the day of His humiliation. And here (in order to contract the subject into a close and instructive form, rather than to wander vaguely over too much ground) I shall select only one mark or attribute of Jesus in the day of His humiliation, which concerned His own person, and another which concerned His work "for us men and for our salvation."

The mark, then, attached personally to the Saviour at His first coming, was that of suffering. He was to be, first, a suffering Messiah, and subsequently, but not till after His sufferings, a glorified Messiah. He was to endure (on account of our sins) all the agonies of body and of spirit which were fulfilled in Him during His short but afflictive stay on earth, when He bore God's wrath, for our iniquity, poured out upon His ever blessed and most righteous head—when He was despised and persecuted, betrayed and deserted—tempted and tried to the uttermost, led as a sheep to the slaughter, and condemned, "the just for the unjust," unto a cruel death, even the death on the cross. It had been very plainly and abundantly prophesied in the Old Testament that all this would come. Accordingly all did

come. For it was after the determinate counsel of God the Father, in His love towards sinners like ourselves, to give His Son for us; and it was after the determinate counsel of His Son, in His matchless love and compassion, thus to be given for us, that He might atone for our guilt. Therefore the Lord Himself repeatedly speaks of His own sufferings as no strange thing. They were not mere results of each hour and day, but, in God's mercy to us, appointed and anticipated things. Thus He saith to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, concerning His death and crucifixion, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory[a]?" Again He saith, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day[b]." Which truth the apostles ever took up as the great foundation of their ministry, as the very centre of all that religion which they preached and established. Thus did St. Peter. He told, in the face of the wondering Jews, on the day of Pentecost, that "God hath made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ[c]." Again, he preached that "God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets that Christ should suffer[d]." And we ever hear of St. Paul thus reasoning: as "opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead[e]."

Thus it is seen that we have a suffering Saviour

[a] Luke xxiv. 26. [b] Luke xxiv. 46. [c] Acts ii. 36.
[d] Acts iii. 18. [e] Acts xviii. 3.

as our own. Thus, in that atonement which He made for our sins, we have a way of salvation opened for us, by which the guiltiest and most miserable sinner of us all may have full forgiveness of his sins, and be made a partaker of the kingdom of heaven. Thus we see, in brighter colours, and more clear by far than our creation, or any other gift that God could possibly have displayed, how "God is love"—how the love of Christ passeth knowledge (to use Scripture language) in its length, breadth, depth and height. And thus through faith in Jesus, as a dying and a suffering Saviour, we have peace with God now and evermore: for Christ having suffered in our place, our guilt is transferred to Him, and His righteousness to us: and we are accounted as righteous for His sake; and, being accepted in Him here, our acceptance with God is sure now and sure for eternity.

Thus much regarding the person of Christ, as to one special attribute or mark of His first coming.

And now to explain the contrast between His relationship to man and the aspect of His character towards them at that time, with His future relationship to men and His aspect towards them at His second coming. Here I would dwell on the truth, that the one grand feature of His work was at that time, and is still, the salvation of those who were lost. I repeat it, the salvation of those who were lost. In His ministry our Lord seems ever to have most carefully guarded

against any other office or work being at that time His. In His whole life there is not to be found one single instance of His inflicting any thing like punishment on wickedness. You remember that the Old Testament is full of the accounts of the most severe judgments inflicted by the ministers, prophets, and saints of God, such as were Moses, Samuel, and Elijah. But there is nothing of the kind in the whole history of Jesus Christ. All sin was lying open and naked to His penetrating eye. The course of transgression and wickedness was going on all around His path. And He was subject Himself, in His own person, to the most dark, unjust and hideous crimes, in His crucifixion, which ever defiled the earth and its inhabitants. Nevertheless, all who are acquainted with Scripture, doubtless remember well how constantly the Lord Jesus disclaimed any other office, to be exercised on His part, at His first coming, except just that of a Saviour. To quote a few such passages: "If any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world[f]." Again, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved[g]." Again, "I judge no man[h]." Neither would He stop in His work of salvation to decide cases of law. "Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" was His word when thus applied to. Nor would He pronounce any thing

[f] John xii. 47. [g] John iii. 17. [h] John viii. 15.

like a judicial sentence against the sinful woman taken in adultery—but His saying was, "Neither do I condemn thee[i]"—neither do I adjudge penalties to thee—"Go, and sin no more." And when His too impetuous apostles, forgetting all humanity in their blind zeal, would have called down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, (on their refusal to receive their Lord, journeying, as He was, to Jerusalem,) how did Jesus act? "He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of: for the Son of man is not come down from heaven to destroy men's lives, but to save them[k]." And these are only a very few of the testimonies borne by our Lord to that most gracious and most comforting truth, even the true character of His first coming; and this character shines through and through it in all the attractive brightness of mercy, forbearance, and love, such as God only could shew, and as never could have entered into man's imagination to conceive. We now approach the second head of our subject, viz. the contrast to all this, which will be exhibited at Christ's second coming.

Having come once in humiliation, Jesus will come the next time in majesty and glory. His sufferings are past, once and for ever. "It is finished," He exclaimed on the cross. Soon He arose and sat down for ever on the right hand of God, from whence, in due season, He will be revealed. Then "every eye shall see Him." Then shall it be fulfilled, "Behold, He cometh with

[i] John viii. 11. [k] Luke ix. 56.

clouds." Then He will be attended with the countless retinue of His "mighty angels" and saints—descending from heaven and compassed with the songs of triumph and of jubilee, "with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God[l]." Then His sudden glory will in a moment illuminate the whole earth. "As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth unto the west, even so shall the coming of the Son of man be." Then all the prophecies about Christ's second coming — so rich, full, and glorious, as to make one almost unwilling to use any mere human words to describe it, shall be brought to pass. But as, in speaking of our Lord's day of humiliation, I have dwelt on one special mark of it, namely, His suffering, so I shall act now, as we attempt to gaze a moment, by faith, on His future majesty. He will then come to judge—to exercise His judgment between those who served and those who served Him not[m]—to condemn the unrighteous to their everlasting doom and to reward His people with everlasting blessedness. Moreover the word *judge* means also to rule. How remarkable it is to find judgment and rule especially disclaimed by our Saviour at His first coming, but especially claimed at His second coming in every part of God's prophetic Word! Hear David in the Psalms! "He cometh, He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with His truth." Hear Isaiah! "Out of Zion shall go

[l] 1 Thess. iv. 16. [m] Malachi iii. 18.

forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people[n]." Once more! "In righteousness doth He judge and make war[o]." And Jesus especially describes Himself as Judge of that coming time. To quote one passage: "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on the right hand, but the goats on the left[p]." Such will be the process of Christ's future judgment. And therefore St. James speaks of Him expressly as the "Judge who standeth before the door." And therefore St. Peter, in the Acts, when preaching to Cornelius, tells, how God commanded him and his fellow-apostles "to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead[q]."

These are just a few plain and most simple passages, selected from the vast multitude of Scriptural testimonies, telling of Jesus Christ, as future judge both of quick and dead—i.e. of all whom He shall find alive at His coming, and of all who have died, from generation to generation, during the existence of this earth. And now, as these subjects ought to be to us most eminently

[n] Isaiah ii. 4. [o] Rev. xix. 11. [p] Matt. xxv. 33.
[q] Acts x. 42.

practical—as they are made known to us in order that they should engage our minds, and hearts, and influence our whole conduct—I shall endeavour to make a practical use of this striking contrast in the offices of Christ at His first and at His second coming.

First, then, since Jesus would not be judge when on earth, but only and exclusively the Saviour, and since He remaineth exactly the same still, and will so remain till the moment arrives for His appearing again and assuming the office of a judge, so also to know and feel this is of the very utmost importance towards the conversion of sinners, and towards the comfort of saints. No repentant sinner — mourning over his wickedness, confessing his transgressions against God, seeking to lay the burden of his sins at the foot of the cross, and exercising faith in Jesus, as his Redeemer — no such person need now have the least apprehension of finding in Jesus a judge, to examine or condemn him on account of his past sin. In this sense, judgment is more than His "strange work." It is a work utterly unknown to Him—a work, with which He will have nothing to do. Now He invites all unto Himself. Now He "receiveth sinners." Now He saith, "Yet there is room." Now He proclaims by the word of His apostle, "Be ye reconciled to God." Now His voice is heard, "Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now He puts no question at all to any returning sinner as to his

past life—demands not what any one has been, but looks on him as he is, and stands ready to save every one coming to Him in faith. In God, through the Saviour, all now is mercy, joy at a lost one found, willingness to receive, to pardon, and to bless. No question—no sentence is uttered—no look or demeanour is now seen in Jesus which would characterise the Judge. Oh! who can understand this without feeling his heart leap and exult for joy? Who can discern the Saviour's merciful arms thus opened to him, and not run—yea, flee to them for succour with all trust and thanksgiving? Who can behold His countenance, in such tender mercy, without experiencing peace, without blessing and praising God, who hath given him grace to seek and find the Lord, as his own full Saviour, Deliverer, and Friend, ere he arises from the grave to behold Him as His Judge? Then come to Christ for His salvation in this day of grace!

For, on the other hand, the time will come when, in the sense recently considered by us—I mean, in that of receiving the guilty, and forgiving, and accepting them—Christ will be no more the Saviour. Awful truth, do you say? Yes, awful indeed, and yet most true! He hath declared Himself that the day is coming when the "door will be shut"—when many will cry out, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but when the dreadful answer will be heard, in the sentence of doom, all sure and irreversible, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." The time is coming when all,

all who have neglected the "great salvation of Christ," would desire to see one—even one—of "the days of the Son of man, but shall not be able:" for those days, as days of mercy and acceptance, will then have all passed away; God "limiteth a certain day." That limit, for the world, is, till Jesus returns as Judge, and for each one of us, till our sojourn here is concluded; and all the power of angels and of men and of all creatures together could not lengthen or protract our day of grace one instant further.

And why? Just for the reason that the Lord Jesus will appear as the Judge. Undoubtedly this word and this title, as given to our Saviour, has a far more extended meaning than we usually give to it. For He will not only pronounce the acquittal of the righteous and the guilt of the unrighteous, and thus fulfil the office of a Judge, but He will also rule for ever in His own kingdom, as judging, and exercising righteousness, for the welfare and the happiness of all then put under Him—of all living creatures under His most glorious dominion. We cannot however do more than take this single glance into the glad and wide-spreading scene of blessedness, thus set before us, concerning Christ's future reign, as the "Prince of peace" and "God of the whole earth." We must return to the practical lessons connected with our subject.

Let us then learn to confide more and more in the Lord Jesus Christ, as our suffering Saviour! Let us honour and magnify the excellency of

those sufferings by realizing more and more that "perfect peace," which faith in them, as atoning for our sins, must bring so sweetly and effectually to all the true children of God. Let us behold, in Jesus Christ, our most loving Friend, Benefactor, and Deliverer, our "all in all" for good, all our salvation, and all our desire! Let us look to Him as the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"—as our great, all prevailing Intercessor who pleaded for us once, that we might not be cut down in our sins, during the dark and perilous time of our unconverted state, and who pleads for us now, that, having been converted, and having been made fruitful, we may bear more fruit still to the glory of God's holy name! And let us more and more rejoice, cheered and assured by the words of that apostle whom Jesus loved: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins[r]." Thus let us trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our present Saviour! Let us also remember Him as our future Judge and King for eternity, before whom the same apostle fell at His feet as dead, when he saw Him revealed in the awful attributes of His future majesty, "with eyes as a flame of fire—with the sharp twoedged sword issuing from His mouth, with His countenance as the sun, when it "shineth in his strength[s]." Let us, whatever others may do—let us listen to the summons: "Stand in awe of Him, all the whole earth;" and

[r] 1 John ii. 1, 2. [s] Rev. i. 16.

let us prove this by obedience in all things, not with any thought of thus meriting salvation, but as the proof that we know and serve the Lord. Let us, whatever others may do—let us obey our Saviour's warning voice: "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!" Let us pray that we may be accounted worthy to "stand before the Son of man!" Let us live looking out for the glad return of our own Almighty Master and Lord! Let us live holily and blamelessly in thought, in word, and in deed, as we should desire to be found living by Him were He to appear immediately! Let us live as those, who, unworthy though they be of the very least mercies, yet have the warrant of God's Word to assure us, that all mercies, yes, all imaginable are ours in Christ Jesus—that we, being washed in the blood of Jesus, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, may anticipate without fear—yea, rather with all gladness of heart, to which we need put no limit and no stint—the glorious appearance of our Judge: and let not our own sin nor our own weakness interfere in the least with this full assurance of our faith. Let us be willing to suffer with Christ, and for Christ, in this present evil world! Let us imitate His spirit and His acts in shewing to our fellow-creatures mercy and love to the uttermost, but of judgment and condemnation as little as we may, consistent with integrity and with fidelity towards them and towards God. Let this be our day of humiliation too! And let us be assured—too dazzling and too bright though it be for our

imperfect vision in this body of sin and of death —let us be well assured, that, if we believe in Jesus, and are ready to suffer with Him, then, in due time, and without fail, we shall reign with Him also; and (with faculties hereafter to be perfected) shall be employed by Him, to accomplish His work, at His appearance, and in His kingdom. Is it not written, "Such honour have all His saints?" Is it not written, that "the greatness of the kingdom shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High[t]," when (to use the language of our text) Jesus, the Son of man, once crucified, and now glorified, shall appear once more, "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven!" Let us all lay these things very near indeed to our hearts! Truly they are things unspeakably important to every one of us: and thankful indeed shall I be if the power of Divine grace should accompany what I have said, and render them a blessing to any hearer. Of which blessing we may expect no small or ineffectual amount, when God our Saviour in the day of His past suffering, and God our Saviour in the day of His future glory, is the subject of the word preached.

[t] Daniel vii. 27.

SERMON XXI.

JESUS AND THE PENITENT THIEF.

LUKE XXIII. 39—44.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

THE three first Gospels each contain the account of our Saviour's crucifixion between the two thieves, and of their conduct towards Him. But while the Gospel of St. Matthew tells of the thieves as both reviling and mocking Him, that of St. Luke describes one thus acting, but the other acting just in an opposite way, even as the text tells. And of this the solution or explana-

tion is, that at first both spake against Him in their sin and unbelief; but that, afterwards, one of them repented, under the effectual grace, power, and illumination of the Holy Spirit, while the other continued, so far as we know, impenitent unto the end. It is my intention now to examine the history of the penitent malefactor, as shewn to us, while he hung on the cross: and may the subject deeply impress us all with a sense of God's mercy to one, chosen unto salvation ere the foundations of the world were laid, but only shewn to be one of His own saved people at the very latest hour of his life, and under the most extraordinary circumstances!

The subject will offer five distinct heads, four of which may be the tokens of the penitent's condition; viz. first, his fear of God; secondly, his conviction and confession of sins; thirdly, his testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ; fourthly, his prayer addressed to that same Saviour. And, lastly, we have the Saviour's answer to His new servant and disciple: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

The narrative begins: "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Here was the beginning of his wisdom. He feared God. He began to fear Him with that holy fear due unto Him from all His creatures. Wilt not thou fear before

Me," saith the Lord? "Stand in awe of Him, all the whole earth." He is to be held in reverence by all about Him. "Fear Him," saith Jesus, "who can destroy both body and soul in hell." "Fear God, and give glory to Him[a]," saith the flying angel in the Apocalypse. Nature bids us fear Him in the very power of the elements—in the fire and the frost—in the storm and the flood and the waves. Our body bids us fear Him in all its capacity for pain and retribution for our sins. Our spirit bids us fear Him in all its subjection to agony and remorse and unspeakable woes of its own. Scripture bids us fear Him, not only in positive texts, such as I have just given, but in the record of man driven out of paradise; of the deluge, destroying all the inhabitants of earth, except the eight preserved in the ark; and with the annunciations of a judgment to come, and of an hell opened and prepared for all the ungodly, and for all who refuse and neglect Jesus Christ as the Saviour, and who will not serve Him. Now one of the very first operations of the Holy Spirit is this — to produce this holy fear of God — that is, of offending Him, and of holy awe in remembrance of Him. Thus it was with the penitent malefactor. And thus, brethren, may it be with ourselves!

Secondly, he experienced conviction of his sins — and he confessed them: "And we indeed justly." I should scarcely conceive that any one, suffering the torture of the cross, would have ut-

[a] Revelations xiv. 7.

tered such a declaration except by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. I should suppose that the malefactor's heart was widely and largely opened by Divine grace to see and to feel all his own past iniquity. I should suppose that his sight was expanded to behold the length and the breadth and the depth and the height of all his transgressions against God and man — that he dwelt not on the one single act or deed which had brought upon him condemnation and the cross, but that he looked straight, through man's law and through man's sentence, unto his present state, as the fit consequence, by the appointment of God, of all his sin. "And we indeed justly." No complaint here! No self-excusing here! No prevarication here! "And we indeed justly." Thus spake the dying malefactor. And may we too partake of the same spirit! "Let us search and try our ways." Let us take the very lowest place in our humiliation on account of our sins! Let our prayer ever be, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified."

Thirdly, the penitent thief made and witnessed a good confession of Christ—"This man hath done nothing amiss." He saw Jesus in the very hour of His extreme agony — saw Him very nigh — knew, in all probability, how both "Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel," had all gathered against Him, and had all united in condemning Him — saw Him abandoned by His disciples at large, and beheld no

deliverance effected for Him any more than for himself and for the partner in his own wicked deeds. But strong in faith, and strong to bear his testimony to the Saviour, he thus declared openly, "This man hath done nothing amiss." "Whosoever," saith Christ, "confesseth Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven." We are not told that it must be done through a long series of years. We are not told that it must be done in any one special form of confession—but such a confession there must be when the fit time and opportunity comes. And it must come from the heart to the lips by the power of the Holy Spirit—for no man can effectually say that Jesus is the Lord, either with heart or lip, except through the Holy Ghost—and it is written, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." And therefore, God grant that we, believing in the Lord Jesus, may never be ashamed of Him, but ever seek and glory to confess Him; and thus may we, inwardly and outwardly, be like unto the dying thief in our open confession of Him, as our Lord and our God!

Fourthly, the penitent thief addressed his prayer to Christ; "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!" What strong, living, saving faith is here! The Jews all expected a Saviour coming in His kingdom, coming in His majesty. But their darkness was in this point—

that they would not believe in a suffering Saviour —in one coming first to humiliation, and afterwards, but not till afterwards, to appear as glorified. They took all the promises and all the prophecies which announced the one, but they rejected all which announced the other. Here was their condemnation. Therefore, as to Jesus, their word and their spirit was, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." They were determined and set on one who should at once "restore the kingdom unto Israel." They knew not, they felt not the need of One who should first die for their transgressions, and make an atonement for every one of them, for all their personal, individual guilt in the sight of their God. Of this they knew nothing. "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." But it was otherwise with the dying thief. To him all things were made new. He was now brought under the power of God the Holy Spirit, unto whom time is as nothing—who can do as much to enlighten a man's mind, and convert a man's heart in one hour, or in one minute, as in a thousand years. That Spirit told and taught him who Jesus was —a crucified Redeemer now, and to be a glorified Redeemer by and by. To Him he committed himself—his soul, or his future and eternal self—in faith and prayer: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Happy and blessed will it be for us, if we, through the Spirit, are partakers of the same faith —if our prayers and our supplications bear the

same character! Happy they who live in "sure and certain hope" of Christ's return in His majesty and glory! Happy they who most earnestly and most stedfastly realize this future event, equally sure with Christ's coming in the day of His humiliation! Happy they who, in all the fulness of the light of the Gospel, can address their Saviour in David's own words: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation; that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance[b]."

Fifthly, we have the Saviour's answer to his new disciple's acknowledgment and supplication: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." O Divine and magnificent assurance! The dying penitent had asked for a blessing at some time indefinitely distant. Jesus assured him of an unspeakable blessing that very day. He probably, as death drew near,—nay, rather certainly, as taught by the Spirit—he would feel that he had another life, quite distinct from that of his poor tortured frame. To this, his spirit—to this, his undying, everlasting soul, Jesus now addressed Himself. His body was to hang a while longer on the cross; and he was to receive new wounds ere he died[c]; and his flesh would see corruption in the malefactor's pit, cast away in all shame and dishonour. But what of that? At the very instant of the separation between

[b] Psalm cvi. 4, 5. [c] John xix. 32.

soul and body—no purgatory intervening with its flames, as the doctrine of Rome tells—but at once, in an instant, his spirit would be in all rest and peace and joy. Yes! his spirit—the true, real, living soul, would at once enjoy that blessing, attached and assured unto all who die in the Lord—saved by grace only, justified by Christ fully, and through Him freed for ever from all guilt, from all sin, from all the evils and all the uncertainties of this present body and this present world. This was all assured to the dying penitent: and much more than this—for we only can surmise, and that very faintly, what the true joy of paradise must be. We must wait a little while for that. We must become beatified spirits ere we fully can know that: but if one thought is and should be precious to us—if one truth should more than any other cheer and inspirit us, as we think of a paradise hereafter—it is the thought and the truth which the text contains, and of blessed necessity involves. It is this—that the dying believer in Christ (quitting as he does all familiar scenes, and familiar faces, and all to which nature clings, and all with which humanity is concerned in this earth) enters not a place where he would meet none to receive him, none to acknowledge him, and none to know him, but where Jesus Himself will meet and bless him, and be to Him an Almighty Friend in his new state of existence. Each dying believer shall at once be with Christ. Therefore might St. Paul well say, "To depart and be with Christ is far better"—i. e. far better than

any earthly happiness even of the best and the highest kind. And therefore Simeon might well ask to "depart in peace," having once seen that salvation which is in Christ Jesus. And therefore no more joyful annunciation ever was announced to a dying man than that which the malefactor heard from His Saviour's lips: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

It now becomes my duty and my privilege to ask of you two or three questions founded on this narrative. And I would do so most solemnly and most affectionately, and with a sense of their being important, beyond the power of human heart to feel or human tongue to tell. I first therefore ask you, Are you living in that fear of the Lord which Scripture enforces and commends throughout, and which was manifested by the dying thief? Do you fear to offend Him by disobeying His laws? Do you live in habitual awe of His Divine majesty—seeking to set the Lord ever before you—looking upon sin as the worst of all imaginable evils—ascertaining diligently what the will of God is, as revealed in the Scripture, and cleaving to it with a tenacity which neither the world nor the devil nor the flesh can sever? Oh! how the great majority in all classes, ages, and characters ought to tremble, to shudder, and to quail at such an inquiry as this! And the only reason why they do not is because of the hardness of their hearts—because they are not yet broke up and softened by the Spirit of God. Oh! may that time come speedily to

you—come to you this very day, who are not yet living in the fear of God! And it is not like other fears, for in it alone you can be safe. "I fear God," said one, "and therefore have no other fear." In it alone you can be confident for any good thing either in this world or for eternity. Yes! in it alone you can be happy, rightly serve God here, or share in the glory of his future kingdom! And this is not only the assurance of God's word, nor of a minister alone, as charged with a message from Him, but I will engage that this will be the witness of every true Christian on earth. And many will perhaps most gladly and most openly tell, that they remember well the days of their darkness and the days of their unbelief, and the days when they lived without the fear of God, but look upon them now with wonder and hatred and dismay, which nothing could remove except the remembrance that it was for sinners like themselves that the Lord Jesus suffered and died, and that His "blood cleanseth from all sin."

Next, I would ask you, whether you have been so humbled and convinced of sin, by the power of the Spirit, that "we indeed justly" would be the sum and the substance of your feelings as to any judgment which might come upon you either in this world or even in the world to come. I believe this feeling to be universal in the true children of God, but not felt or realized by any other individual on earth. They, with St. Paul, look upon themselves as "slain by the law"—struck by it as it were dead, with eternal condemnation

—adjudged to a sentence which nothing less than God's mercy in Christ Jesus could alter or remove at all. Their hope—their confidence all lies in this—in "mercy rejoicing" (or glorying) against judgment." They do not go on doubting, cavilling, or questioning whether they deserve this or that evil on earth. They do not go on murmuring in their hearts, or forming theoretical objections against the judgments pronounced in God's sure word. No! they clearly see that sin and disobedience are such hateful and such heinous things, that they could be visited by no imaginable penalty or woe under which their word and confession would not be, "and we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds." Blessed indeed are they who are moulded by the Spirit into this frame! They see the law of God. They understand it. They love it. They apply it to themselves. And so it brings them to Jesus and the Gospel. And thus its work is done. And it is written, "Great peace have they who love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

In those words too, spoken about Christ by the dying penitent, "This man hath done nothing amiss," is just that spirit shewn, which I would ever look for and desire in myself, and all men. I do not merely mean to say, that a simple head knowledge or approbation of our Saviour's worth will profit any soul; but much more was contained in this testimony. The whole world around was against Jesus at this time; but the man who thus spake was for Him. He thus set

his own personal seal to all the truths concerning Christ's person, Christ's words and works, which had brought Him to the cross under the false charges of His adversaries. He confessed Jesus openly and plainly. Now just let me ask, Is this your habit? Is this your delight? Is this the desire of your hearts? Do you enter into the truth, as regards Him, in all its fulness, and declare that truth with your lips and embody it in your lives? Do you manifest your own personal sense and experience of Him, as God, in all power, and as Man, in all suffering and in all human sympathy for you, His brethren? May the Lord greatly multiply the number among us, to whom Jesus would say, "Ye are My witnesses!" And may that testimony, inward and outward, be clear as the day, abiding and unfailing as the Spirit Himself, from whom alone it can spring, and by whom alone it can be maintained amidst all obstacles! Away with all undue reserve! Away with all fear of making a profession! Away with all thought of its being a presumptuous thing to feel in your heart, and to tell with your tongues, and to shew in your lives, what you owe to the Lord Jesus Christ! Know it! Feel it! Shew it! It is His due. It is your duty. Oh! may it more be experienced as your privilege—as your joy—as the very life in which you "live and move and have your being!"

And, lastly, let me ask, whether your prayers and the strong desire of your hearts corresponds with His who made that petition to the Saviour;

"Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom?" Anticipating—waiting for—watching for Christ's return — this is undoubtedly the spiritual attitude in which all true believers are described through the pages of the New Testament. That Word would bid us not less to look forward to His second coming than we look back to His first coming. Each is a matter of just equal certainty. The only difference is, that one is an event of the past, while the other is an event of the future. At the exact moment, appointed by God, Jesus will appear in His glory, just as at the exactly appointed time He was born in Bethlehem. "Our God will come, and He will not keep silence." Woe, woe unto all those whom He will not remember then! Woe, woe unto all those who shall then hear those fearful and fatal words "I know ye not," already spoken in the Lord's prophetic declarations, as the doom of very many! They may have had great remembrance upon earth—remembrance for their rank, as kings and as conquerors, and the statesmen of renowned lands. They may have had great remembrance as philosophers and poets, and men of intellectual gifts and capacity. They may have carved out their own path to renown, imperishable while the world lasts; but all this remembrance will profit them just nothing, if Jesus the Lord, when He shall appear to "judge the quick and the dead," does not remember them, as having been His in this present life. Nay more! You may have had much ease and comfort

in this present life. You may have followed your own ways and your own imaginations, and consulted your own taste, pleasure, or advantage, or any thing else, on which your minds were set, but all these remembrances will then be quite worthless; and how you would then long for the most brief renewal of your former days, that they might be spent to the honour and remembrance of Jesus Christ, of your obligations to Him, and so as to secure His remembrance of you in His future kingdom. But it is not too late for any living man, woman, or child to begin such a life now. The dying thief speaks to you this message from his cross. And as such a life cannot be begun in a more promising way nor better than by prayer, let him now teach and commend to you his own petition—"Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!"

And, surely, this petition, called forth "in spirit and truth" from the mind taught, and the heart opened, and the lips sanctified by the Holy Ghost—this petition, I say, shall be answered by the Lord of glory. Whosoever thus prays, and lives in the spirit of this prayer, shall be remembered! A woman may forget her sucking child, strange and unnatural as such forgetfulness would be, but Jesus is represented in that Scripture, which can neither be broken nor unfulfilled, as bearing His people close to his heart, like Aaron the high priest—as having them graven in the palms of those hands which were nailed for your sake to the cross. You, who love and prize God's

Word, you will be able to rejoice in the strength of such testimonies! They will not be to you dead and unmeaning things, but mighty to instruct, mighty to cheer, and mighty to support you in the hour of need. And that need, in much of its likeness to the condition of the dying thief, must very soon be on every one of us. I pass over all which concerns his especial wickedness and his especial punishment. That was all forgotten—forgotten for ever by his God, when he became a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. All stain of sin—every spot of it—yes, every speck of it, was then washed clean away in the Saviour's blood. And so it may be forgotten by us too. Many of us are perhaps far, far more guilty than he was in our transgressions against God: for we know not what opportunities he had, nor what light he had, but we do know well our own advantages, and how we too often have lived as if no Saviour had given Himself for us, to make us His own here, and as if we had no written Word of God to obey. But, as I said just now, we too shall soon draw near our end in this present world. It may be all gently and with little pain. It may be in keen suffering. It may be after long ailment. Or it may be on the notice of a few weeks, days, hours or minutes, or seconds, as with one found dead in his bed, cut off by some sudden accident, or dropping down in his walk. How shall we then need an answer to the supplication, "Lord, remember me when Thou

comest into Thy kingdom!" And Jesus will grant it unto every one of His people, called and converted to Him at any time or by any means. I once put this truth in a few simple lines. Let me repeat them, as suited to our subject now:

Blessed, honoured, happy they,
Living on day after day—
Living on year after year
In God's holy faith and fear!
Blessed too—yea, blessed they,
On whose souls the heavenly ray
Later shines; yet shines to prove
The wonders of Almighty love!

"Too late" is a word unknown to the preacher of the Gospel. All who truly turn to the Lord, at any time, shall be saved. All such shall be heard—shall be answered—shall be received by their God and Saviour. They too shall have all the benefits of Christ's precious death. They too shall be with Him in paradise the instant that the spirit quits their mortal frame. And their spirit and their body shall be reunited once more, at His coming, at the day of the resurrection, when He shall manifest His kingdom of glory, and give to every one of His own saved people all joy and blessedness through the love and remembrance of their God and Saviour. Dear brethren, may this be your portion! It is offered now to every one of you. Only look for it to Jesus your Saviour! Then it is yours now and shall be yours for ever! And may the dying thief

in his penitence, in his faith, in his confession of sin, in his confession of the Saviour, in his prayer, be an example to you and to me, and not our condemnation! May he, from the cross, speak to us, preach to us now, in the power of the Holy Ghost!

SERMON XXII.

JESUS AND MARY MAGDALENE.

JOHN XX. 17.

Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.

THESE words were spoken to the very first person unto whom the Lord Jesus appeared after His resurrection from the grave. That person was a woman — namely, Mary Magdalene, so called from the town of Magdala, whence she came, and out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils. She was most devoted to her Lord and Benefactor; and while His body was lying in the tomb she had joined with other women, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, in buying and preparing spices and ointments, that they might come and anoint Him. Without entering here into any exact details, explanatory of the different visits paid by these holy and devoted women to the sepulchre, I shall only state now (using the very words of Scripture, though drawn

and put together from the four different evangelists) that when the Sabbath was past, (during the entire of which the body of Jesus had lain in the grave,) very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, while it was yet dark, as it began to dawn, the two loving companions, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, came to the sepulchre, in order to arrange for that anointing which they had in view—and then a second time, together with Salome, "they came unto the sepulchre, at the rising of the sun[a]," and as they approached, "they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away." Soon it was discovered that the Lord's body was not there. Mary Magdalene ran to inform Simon Peter and St. John of this fact, though as yet understanding nothing whatsoever as to the nature of His resurrection. In the mean time the other two women went into the sepulchre, where the angel addressed them in cheering words of information as to their Lord. On which they went out and fled in amazement with fear and joy all mingled together, (as we may well conceive,) and told the disciples what had taken place. Peter and John ran then to the sepulchre, Mary Magdalene returned too[b]; and thus we must conclude it was, how she, having previously run to inform Peter and John, could appear, as we are told she did in the

[a] Mark xvi. 2.

[b] I follow Townshend in the arrangement here.

11th verse of the chapter containing our text. It is there said: "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." And then follows the narrative, referring only to her of all the disciples of the Lord, whether men or women. We may read it from the Scripture: "And as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master."

And now I might not inappropriately dwell on the loving, devoted, and patient attachment of this favoured woman, which made her linger at the sepulchre, in tears, and alone, when the others had retired. I might not inappropriately dwell on the honour and privilege granted to her on this distinguished occasion, in being the very first witness, among men or women, to the Lord Jesus Christ, in His living person, after the resurrection. I might not inappropriately dwell

on the character of this first appearance of the Lord, as not made to multitudes, nor even to the twelve, nor to any company where man might have expected that such an event might take place, but to one woman only—waiting in the garden, when all others had retired and probably left her alone. But at these topics I shall merely glance, though pointing them out as matters for holy meditation. But let us pass on to examine the different points contained in the text itself. And may the Holy Spirit prove our mighty and unerring guide, saving us from all false or fanciful interpretation, and leading us safely into all the truth therein contained, and profitable for us to know, feel, and apply!

We first meet a command—brief but authoritative: "Touch Me not." Now of all the explanations given as to this injunction, (and I readily admit that many are proposed,) none seems to me nearly so satisfactory as the following, viz. "Embrace me not[e]." "Hold me not." "Cling to me not." And this is founded on the supposition, that (on the wondrous recognition that had just taken place, through the look of Jesus, but still more, in all probability, through the tone and the manner in which her name had been pronounced) Mary had immediately thrown herself at the feet of Jesus and laid hold of Him or His garments, lest He should depart from her and be no more seen. Well may we suppose that this was among the first thoughts and apprehensions

[e] See Parkhurst's Lexicon.

which crossed her astonished mind! She had once before, so far as she thought at the time, lost the presence of her Lord by crucifixion and death. Most unexpectedly — in a manner far beyond all which human anticipation could reach, she had received Him once more — regained Him, as it were, from the dark shades and stern gates of the grave. All His love towards her — all His mighty acts in her behalf — all the gracious intercourse which He had held with her, now perhaps rushed upon her. She thought that He was leaving her at once and for ever — that He could no more be one to hold any sort of communion on earth with her or His disciples. She thought Him, in all likelihood, about to ascend from the garden itself, like another Enoch or Elijah — that if she did not detain Him at that instant, there would be no time, no second opportunity for one word or one act more of inquiry or adoration, or gratitude, or praise, or supplication. Therefore, we suppose, she held Him; and therefore, we suppose, Jesus saith unto her, "Touch Me not." We shall soon see that the reason for the command, given by the Lord Himself, makes this explanation of the act of Mary Magdalene, and of the command itself, one very worthy of acceptance. But I speak not positively here. I only seek to interpret a verse of some difficulty in the manner which appears to me most satisfactory.

That reason follows immediately: "For I am not yet ascended to My Father." "Yet" is, I think, the word on which we should dwell here,

as giving the emphatic meaning to the whole sentence. Jesus was to ascend into heaven—was to return unto that glory, which He had as His own before the world was made—was to sit down at the right hand of God the Father, till all His enemies shall be made His footstool — was to send down from thence the "Promise of the Father," even the Holy Spirit, to endow His people with power from on high — was to bid farewell to His servants on mount Olivet, but not without the angelic declaration how "that same Jesus, whom they had seen go into heaven, should so come in like manner, as they had seen Him go into heaven." All this was to happen; but not yet. Forty days were to elapse during which the Lord Jesus would "shew Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs," speaking "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." During this remarkable time Jesus would appear at many and at frequent intervals, as, for instance, to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, expounding in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself till their hearts burnt within them at the divine and glorious exposition. This was to take place on that very evening of His resurrection: and on the same evening He was to stand in the midst of His disciples, when they were assembled with their doors closed, and to address them, "Peace be unto you!" and He was to shew them His pierced hands, His feet and His side, and to gladden their hearts with that most excellent sight—even the sight of

Himself, their risen Saviour. And after another week He was to appear again unto the same company, with Thomas too among them, who had been absent on the former occasion, and to bid him "reach forth his finger and behold His hands, and reach forth his hand and thrust it into His side, and to be no longer faithless but believing." And, again, during those very forty days Jesus was to manifest Himself unto seven of His apostles, while they were fishing at the lake of Tiberias, and to sit at a repast with them on the shore, and to tell them the lot, appointed for one, at least, of the number. And, not to mention each separate appearance of our risen Saviour, He was to be "seen by five hundred brethren at once," who were to be (as it were) a very "cloud of witnesses" to the glory of His resurrection. And, finally, Jesus was to lead His chosen apostles out of Bethany, to bid them "go forth into all the world, and preach the Gospel unto every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And then, while He blessed them, He was, in the body, to be parted from them, and to be taken up, and carried into heaven. All this, yes, and much more, if we had time to describe, or dilate upon it, was to happen in the forty days before the ascension of the Lord unto His heavenly throne. And therefore it seems to me, that the Lord did thus calm and appease the eager and alarmed apprehensions with which Mary Magdalene was seized, lest she

was now to lose His presence at once and for ever. Hence, with that mighty brevity of language, in which so often He expressed His authoritative will and pleasure—hence He uttered the words to her, whose whole spirit seemed bent at the moment on one object alone, in her intense love — even that of detaining Him, and who shewed by her attitude and act the strong emotions of her soul. Hence He said, "Touch Me not;" and gave, as the satisfying cause for the command, "for I am not yet ascended to My Father." So He informed her that this was not the last or only opportunity of seeing Him—that due occasions would arise for her and her fellows in faith, and love, and zeal, to behold Him, and worship Him, and hold communion with Him, as their risen Lord: for though risen, He was still to be, at intervals, among them, to manifest Himself to their eyes in comfort, power, and love, and not finally to leave them for forty days to come.

Mary, thus assured and comforted, was now honoured by the Lord with a message from Himself. He sent her with a word to His disciples at large: "Go to My brethren." The message which she had to bear will presently meet us: but let us pause a while to consider this most gracious and most condescending expression —"My brethren." Elsewhere, in the days of His sojourn on earth, the Saviour says to His followers, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but

friends"— and here is another advance in the honourable and endearing titles with which our Lord addressed His true people. "Go to My brethren." He and His people are of one common Father, and no language can express what I wish to convey more clearly and mightily than that in the second chapter of the Hebrews, where Jesus is described as the Captain of our salvation, "made perfect" (i. e. a full and complete Saviour) "through sufferings." And then it is added immediately, "He that sanctifieth" (that means Jesus here) "and they who are sanctified are all of one:" (that is, of one common Father, even God the Father:) "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." All this most graciously and most fully declares the intimate and loving union between the Lord Jesus and all true believers; for, though being Almighty God, He is our brother still, through partaking of our flesh and blood, through being made man, and continuing man—perfect and glorified man — even unto this time and for evermore.

And now hear the message with which Mary was intrusted: "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Here again is conveyed the same blessed and substantial truth, which the title "My brethren" more briefly con-

tains in itself. "My Father and your Father, My God and your God." But to introduce only a few thoughts on Christ's ascension into heaven.

This ascension of the Lord Jesus, in His human body, was a subject of prophecy. Hear David in the Psalms: "Thou hast ascended up on high: Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men." This, no doubt, first of all describes the gift of the Spirit, which Jesus received, as the "promise of the Father," on His ascension into heaven.

Again, this ascension of the Lord Jesus, in His human body, was a subject of type in the Mosaic ceremonies. It was not only prophesied, but it was typified also: and some types, by their nature and clearness, were much more speaking and impressive things than any mere words could be. We know that, under the law, the Jewish high priest was a living type or representative of Jesus the Messiah in His priestly character. The atonement which the high priest made, on the great day of atonement, was an express type or representation of Jesus, as the propitiation for our sins. And once only in each year was the high priest ordered or permitted to enter into the very "holy of holies," or the inward sanctuary of the temple. Now, without stopping to consider in detail that which was figured by the various parts of the tabernacle or temple, it is perfectly evident that this "holy of holies" represented that heaven where the Almighty doth specially dwell: and therefore in the ninth

[illegible] and [illegible] and [illegible] and [

with special graces and duties which we are to exercise and manifest in God's sight. As Jesus was born, so we must be born again. As Jesus died, so we must die unto sin. As Jesus rose, so we must rise unto righteousness. But as it is not sufficient for us once to rise thus—as we are to continue risen and ascended above the poor, passing concerns of this present world—as we are not only to contemplate Jesus once rising from the tomb, but also now sitting at the right hand of God, ever living and abiding there to bless us, and to make intercession for us, and to pour down His benefits upon us in all bounty and plenteousness, so all these privileges and all these duties are ours, in the most intimate connection with our ascended Saviour. The collect of Ascension day very beautifully sums up those very points on which I now dwell. It not only teaches us to pray that we may "in heart and mind thither ascend," where Jesus has already gone, but also that we might with Him "continually dwell." And this is just in agreement with the language of St. Paul to the Ephesians, where he tells of believers in Christ as those whom God hath not only raised up, but whom He has also made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." May this be our happy and our holy attitude, so far as our spirit is concerned, even in this present world! Let us live as those whose treasure is in heaven, even Jesus Christ! Let us live as those whose conversation is heavenly! Let us not merely seek, as so many do, to come

occasionally into the participation of holy engagements, holy pursuits, and holy meditations, but let us live in them, and upon them, and among them! Let us find and enjoy these things as our very home, in which we may continually dwell, in the spirit and affections of our heart, with and nigh unto Jesus Christ, our risen and ascended Lord! And let us do all this, looking to the Lord for ability, through the Holy Ghost, and entering into the experience and joy of the Psalmist, when he exclaimed, adoring his Lord in the word of prophecy; "Be Thou exalted, Lord, in Thine own strength! So will we sing and praise Thy power[c]."

[c] Psalm xxi. 13.

SERMON XXIII.

JESUS CONFESSED BY THOMAS AS HIS GOD.

JOHN XX. 28.

And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God.

AFTER our Lord Jesus Christ had been crucified, and had risen from the dead, He shewed Himself to chosen witnesses, appeared on frequent occasions to His people, and gave them many "infallible proofs" of His resurrection, "being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." He appeared to Mary Magdalene and others on the very morning of His resurrection; and "toward evening" He communed with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and sat down with them, and took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them; and having made Himself known to them in this very act, He vanished out of their sight; and in the course of that same evening He appeared to His disciples at Jerusalem, in a manner which I now must

describe more particularly, because without so doing we cannot enter into the full apprehension of our text.

"The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith them, Peace be unto you." He proclaimed unto them—yea, much more—He bestowed upon them that peace and reconciliation with God, of which He had spoken before, as His legacy and gift to His church, and which He had now acquired and won for it by His sufferings even unto death, and by His resurrection: as it is written; "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Then He shewed to His disciples His hands and His feet, pierced with the nails which had been driven through them on the cross; and thus He gave them all full and unquestionable proofs that He was no phantom and no spirit, but the living Jesus, in His own body, crucified once, but now alive, and to live for evermore. Then Jesus said to them again; "Peace be unto you." Then He ordained and appointed them to go forth, and accomplish His work, as witnesses for Him, and in the strength of His mighty and adorable name; "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Then He breathed on them, and endowed them with their high and most glorious commission: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosesoever

sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Of which the explanation is, I believe, this: "The Holy Spirit is yours, by whom you have the Gospel, which you are to preach and to proclaim. And I will sanction your word. I will be its warrant. It shall hold good, so that your declaration on the remission or forgiveness of sins unto every believer shall come to pass; and your declaration on the continuance of sin and wrath abiding on every one who neglects the message of grace and salvation, through My name, shall come to pass also." Such was Christ's appearance at that time. Such were the proofs which He gave of His own living personality, seen once more and looked upon by the eyes of His disciples. And such was the commission which His servants received to go forth and preach the Gospel, with all assurance that not one of their words should fail of all sanction and fulfilment even from God Himself, so that their work should be God's work also.

We next hear in St. John's narrative, (which alone tells us these things,) that one of the twelve was absent on that memorable night. "Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came." We are not informed what the reason was. Perhaps his faith may have so failed for a season, after Jesus had been put to death, as to make him indifferent, and therefore tardy in keeping the appointed time. Perhaps he had allowed some slight and unbefitting cause

to detain him from coming as soon as the other disciples. At all events he was not there when Jesus came: and if he was to be blamed for his absence, (which seems very probable,) then, in the ensuing narrative, we have another proof how God out of evil continually brings good, and through the sins or omissions of men introduces His most gracious words and most loving deeds; just as the three most precious parables about God's willingness to put away sin, and to receive the penitent sinner into the bosom of His love, (viz. the lost sheep, the missing piece of money, and the prodigal son,) all arise out of the bitter murmur of the Pharisees against the Lord Jesus Christ for receiving sinners, and for eating with them[a]. So here, through the absence of Thomas, for which most probably he was to blame; and through his incredulity when told by his fellow-disciples about the appearance of the Lord, for which he was certainly to blame, Jesus condescended to give the most convincing proof of His own identity as our crucified, but also risen Lord.

Proceeding with the narrative, we find that Thomas joined his brethren after Jesus had departed from among them. On which his fellow-apostles immediately addressed him, "We have seen the Lord." But instead of giving credit to their testimony, as of faithful and honest witnesses, who would not think of deceiving him; and instead of being prepared for that which had hap-

[a] Luke xv. 1.

pened by the many miracles of his Master and Lord, even to raising the dead, (like the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus,)—instead, I say, of thus giving credit, where credit was due; and instead of being prepared by the former acts of the Lord, in raising others, for this Divine act in raising Himself from the dead, Thomas shewed here his entire incredulity, and just that "evil heart of unbelief" for which, according to the Gospel of St. Mark[b], all the eleven were upbraided by the Lord as a sin. It is written there, "He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen." Thomas was full of this unbelieving spirit. He appears even to have spoken with a kind of impetuous obstinacy; "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." A most culpable and unwarrantable saying! For what does he do thereby? He makes the solemn asseveration how he will not believe that which had absolutely taken place, and that which his fellow-disciples had told him, otherwise than on certain terms, which he ventures to lay down. I would ask again, what does he do? He does no less than prescribe before God that exact measure and amount of evidence, in all its detail, without which he will not believe,

[b] Chap. xvi. 14.

and will not be satisfied. There was in all this much presumption and sin—an evidence to prove how little advance either in faith or in holiness, or in knowledge of spiritual truth, or in any enlightened apprehension of their Saviour's Person and work was made by the apostles yet, or indeed before the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Wondrous indeed it was that, instead of being left in his unbelief and hardness of heart, Thomas should have truly and absolutely received from his condescending Master and Lord those very signs and that very testimony which he here prescribes and demands, as without which he will not be satisfied—he, at all events, will never believe in his risen Lord! What forbearance—what mercy is here!

Let us pass over another week of time! And then what saith the Scripture on the subject now before us? "After eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you." With this gracious and tender salutation He began. He renews His merciful gift, new every morning, new at every assembly of His people. And Thomas shared in its comfort and encouragement, as, no doubt, he specially needed. "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." And thus, just as in the sacraments, the Lord condescendingly allowed and employed an appeal

to other senses, in addition to the testimony of the spoken Word. And the eye of Him who was incredulous is summoned to exercise its natural faculties: and the finger and the hand are ordered to be stretched out, that they might touch and might handle the Living Word, God manifest in our human body on the earth—and the very wounds are felt, inflicted upon Jesus by the hands of wicked men—the wounds for our transgression and the bruises for our sins which Jesus bore then; and which we may believe that He will for ever bear[d] in His glorified body, as the trophies and the everlasting tokens of His most glorious and almighty love in dying for the sin of man.

The sacred history proceeds: "And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and My God." Here is the full confession of faith in a Divine Saviour, in Jesus as God. And this has ever been considered as a most mighty testimony to the Divinity of Christ. We who are and have long been from our childhood believers in Christ, as God, from the whole of Scripture, need not stop to dwell at any length on a single text as proving it. And I have other purposes before me in considering these words. But nevertheless, in passing, let us observe how the language was addressed to Jesus Himself: "Thomas said unto Him, My Lord and My God"—also how the Saviour received this appeal unto Himself as God—and then how Jesus immediately commends

[c] See Zechariah xiii. 6.

Thomas for his faith, and for his confession of faith! And marking all this, if any one on earth wants a new and increased confirmation of his faith in the crucified Jesus as the Almighty God, let him honestly take it from this text, and let him rejoice for himself, that Thomas was led by the Holy Spirit to address the Lord Jesus Christ not only without reproof, but with commendation for his word of faith, and to say unto Him, "My Lord and My God."

Let me now tell my chief object and aim in directing attention to these words. It is with an earnest and heartfelt desire that each one by God's help would seek to ascertain in what way and spirit he would utter the same language personally and individually for himself. Can you say to Jesus for yourselves—can you address Him, "My Lord and My God." I would put this following question, because I am perfectly convinced that no one should be satisfied without feeling its weight and importance: What will it profit any one that Jesus should be a Saviour to others, if He is not a Saviour to him—if you have not heard and responded to His voice—if you have not really turned nor come to Him, as the Shepherd of your own soul—if you cannot say, "My beloved is mine, and I am His?" With less than this no saint of old time was ever satisfied, even as David proves, where he saith, "I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." With less than this no saint of any time, yea, no believer in Christ, whether

young or old, whether rich or poor, whether setting out in the ways of the Lord, or howsoever advanced, ought to be satisfied, at any time. The salvation of our own souls, and a good scriptural assurance that we are Christ's, and that Christ is ours, is a question, believe me, of such unspeakable importance, that, till it is settled, nothing else, I might almost say, is worth thinking of at all. Well and reasonably may any one ask continually, "What shall I do to be saved?" and never be at ease until there is given to him an answer of peace and rest and assurance in Christ Jesus the Lord. To be content with less is quite unreasonable—moral madness indeed. You may live in a godly and enlightened land, where Christianity prevails, where the Gospel is faithfully preached throughout its length and breadth, and where the Bible is much honoured and read, and where Christ hath much people in the country, to believe in Him, and to love Him, and to serve Him—but all this will not save you, unless you, personally and individually, are under grace—unless you give your own heart to Him—unless you can say to Him, through the Holy Ghost, "My Lord and My God." If you are unholy and worldly in spirit, and neglect the salvation of your own soul through the redemption provided for you and offered to you freely and fully in Jesus Christ, it will not profit you to have belonged to a church where there was a goodly multitude, or to a family where there was a goodly portion of the family who could say

to Jesus "My Lord and My God." Truly, I am not aware of any subject, whatsoever, on which the minister of Jesus Christ ought to be more pressing than on this. He should watch for souls, not only as a gardener content with the general appearance of the plants of his garden, as fair and blooming, on the whole, to the beholder's eye; but he should be as the gardener who makes it his business that every single plant therein should be living and healthy and luxuriant, so much as in him lies. And the minister of Jesus should be as a faithful and attentive shepherd, who attends to his sheep, one by one; for we find St. Paul, that great example to ministers, telling it out as the desire of his heart, and as the aim of his labour, that he should present "every one" of his flock "perfect in Christ Jesus." But how can this be except every one will also look unto himself, or unto herself? We, as ministers, cannot compel any one to awake and arise from his death in trespasses and sins. We have no magical art or incantation with which we can constrain you to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We have our part, and you have your part! Let this, I pray you, be rightly understood! Act upon it in the Lord's name! We can and we do set before you Christ Jesus the Lord, once crucified for you—now interceding for you—and to come again in His glory to take his people to Himself, that where "He is, there they may be also!" We can tell you of the rich, inexhaustible treasures of His love; but it is for you to come

and receive them, and enjoy them, and use them. That others are enriched by them will not enrich you. We can tell of a never-failing remedy for all spiritual sickness and disease, and of a sure antidote against the death of the soul; but it is for you to take that never-failing remedy, and to have recourse, each one for yourselves, to that sure antidote. We can tell of that forgiveness of all sin and of all transgression which the Lord God Almighty offers to every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ—of such a general, nay, universal amnesty for every sinner, who receives and submits to His loving and most easy yoke of dominion; but it is for you, each one for yourselves, to embrace these offers of love, to appropriate to yourself all this mercy and deliverance! As no man can redeem his brother, or his child, or his friend — as no man on earth can do so, but "must let that alone for ever," so no earthly minister can, of himself, save any one of his flock, man, woman, or child, or make any individual to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and become an heir of glory. Life must be communicated from the Spirit of life unto you, individually, if you are to live and to be saved at all. These are plain and quite incontrovertible truths —so plain, indeed, that I almost pause to inquire whether they can be needed—whether I am not repeating too common things. But I see ample reason to prove that they are needed; for we all, by nature and custom, act on other principles in matters which concern the soul. We cast off the

burden of our own responsibility, and lay it any where, in preference to taking it upon ourselves. And wherever the Romish religion prevails great advantage has been taken by the priests of this natural infirmity of man—even to such a degree, that the superstitious and deluded people are persuaded to think that masses or sacrifices offered for them by the priests, even after they are dead, can obtain God's favour to them, and a remission of some punishment due to their former sins. This is only the vain imagination of man (that he can be religious by proxy, or please God through other men, and not by himself) pushed to its utmost length, and used with the utmost delusion on the one hand, and with the utmost audacity upon the other. It is our part to see that we be not followers, in any degree, of such ideas: for, believe me, the root of them is in us all. Each one of us must rest on our own foundation—i. e. on the Lord Jesus Christ—as our own sole and entire support, our all in all. Each one of us must be joined to Him by a living faith, represented by the life in the sap of the vine communicated to each branch. Each one of us must have the love of Christ taking possession of his or her own heart. Each one of us must "live a life of faith in the Son of God;" "walk in the Spirit," and not according to the flesh; and shew forth whose each one is, and whom each one serves, in the sight of God at all events, and, so much as in us lies, in the sight of the members of his church upon earth, and of the world at large.

Each one of us must take up our own cross and bear it, whatsoever it may be. Each one of us must be a partaker of holy peace and joy. Each one of us must walk in that liberty of spirit wherewith the Lord Jesus Christ makes His people free. And here, in conclusion, let me point out, for the special use of the true children of God, that the very same things which are absolutely needful for every saved soul are at the same time the inestimable privileges of every saved soul. Personal religion is an absolutely needful thing, and personal religion is a glorious privilege. If it is needful to be able to address Jesus thus from the heart, "My Lord and my God"—oh! what a privilege also it is so to do! Let me entreat you then to make your own personal religion more and more the grand aim and object of your life. Let your prayers to God be such as these: "Search me, O God, and try my ways:" "Visit me with Thy salvation:" "Grant that I may see the felicity of Thy chosen:" "Make me a devoted and consistent follower of Christ Jesus my Lord." Let your prayer to Jesus be just that of the bride in the Song of Songs: "Let me see Thy countenance; let me hear Thy voice: for sweet is Thy voice, and Thy countenance is comely." Every encouragement is promised unto us individually. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." Christ knoweth His own sheep and His own lambs—I remind the young of that—Christ knoweth His own sheep and His own lambs by name. Every

single sound grain of the spiritual living wheat will have its place in the heavenly barns of God. Jesus saith not only to the church at large but to every one — howsoever aged you may be, perhaps hardened in worldliness — or however young, and perhaps hitherto quite thoughtless about your everlasting souls — howsoever rich and exalted, or howsoever poor and abased— howsoever learned or howsoever ignorant—whatever your character—whatever your sins—whatever your advantages or whatever your disadvantages—Jesus, I repeat it, says to each of you, as One graciously and condescendingly standing at a closed door, but coming and knocking through my appeal to you this day in His blessed name: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any one hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in unto Him, and will sup with him, and he with me." I will be his intimate no less than his almighty friend. I will be his Saviour, no less than his God. Hear then the word of exhortation! "Hear, and your souls shall live." And though you see not yet the Lord Jesus Christ, as Thomas did, with your bodily eyes, yet may you have your part in the promise, "Blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed." And may you be entitled to say unto the Lord Jesus Christ, with all the confidence of love, in life, in death, and through the coming eternity, "My Lord and my God!"

SERMON XXIV.

JESUS BIDDING HIS APOSTLES TARRY AT JERUSALEM.

LUKE XXIV. 49.

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

THESE words form part of the direction, or, as we may call it, the commission given by our Saviour to His apostles just before His ascension into heaven. It is the same account as that at the beginning of the book of the Acts. There we are told that Jesus, "being assembled with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence[a]." Then, as we find in the verses preceding the text, Jesus declares how in His own sufferings, death, and resurrection, that only had taken place which He had always told them

[a] Acts i. 4, 5.

should happen, and which had been announced in the books of Moses, and in the Psalms, and in the Prophets concerning Him. Then He "opened their understanding"—a proof (if we needed it) that it was shut up before, as indeed all their conduct clearly shews; and told them that in God's purpose to redeem man all this was needful and fitting for His glory. This is expressed in the words—"it behoved Christ to suffer." And it was needful, or befitting too, that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Then, introducing the assurance with the word "behold"—as something marvellous and most glorious to know—Jesus said, "Behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you;" and, finally, he bids them wait the due and appointed time for them to go forth on their evangelic work: "but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

Having thus introduced and examined the text, I shall make it my endeavour distinctly to notice two different facts: firstly, the utter unfitness of the apostles up to this time for their high mission; secondly, their perfect fitness for it after Christ's promise here given had been fulfilled.

First, then, as to knowledge, they were utterly unfit for their work before the Holy Spirit had descended on them. Let us notice a few instances, shewing their complete ignorance about

the Person and work of their Saviour! Just before Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem, that He might be crucified, we find Him saying, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again[b]." And now mark what follows! See how accurately and with what care the apostles' ignorance of all these things is told! "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken[c]."

Let us take another well-known instance! When Jesus had declared the very same truths—the grand, leading, primary truths, on which our salvation depends, and all the glory of God, as our Redeemer—we find that "then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee Lord," (or, as you see it in the margin of your Bibles, "Pity Thyself, Lord[d]"): "this shall not be unto Thee[e]." And these words drew on him Christ's strong condemnation, as indeed they well might; for had his persuasion been adopted, he and the whole world would have been for ever lost, and Jesus would have had no crown of saved souls—no family to bless Him for ever, as

[b] Luke xviii. 31. [c] Luke xviii. 34. [d] Ἵλεώς σοι, Κύριε. [e] Matt. xvi. 22.

redeemed from the wrath of God, and made, through Him, the heirs of immortality.

Again, in the twelfth of St. John, we are told of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. For a moment He was welcomed with all gladness and joy. The palm-trees were borne in the hands of the people; and the multitude of the disciples praised God with a loud voice; and they cried Hosannah! and Jesus entered the city sitting on the ass's colt. But was there any due knowledge of the Saviour's true Person and office at the time? By no means. Observe the sixteenth verse! "These things understood not the disciples at the first" —nor until Jesus was glorified.

One example more will suffice. That, too, is a very striking one; for it illustrates the ignorance of Christ's apostles until the very last. On the day of His ascension, when they were come together with Him, "they asked Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel[f]?"—shewing that even still they expected a temporal kingdom from Christ, in which their own Jewish nation should immediately arise to power and glory, as of yore; and that at this moment they knew nothing at all of "Jerusalem being trodden under foot by the Gentiles," even to this day, and of at least near two thousand years ere Jesus should return again in His majesty to rule and to reign on the throne of David in that "kingdom of which there shall be no end."

[f] Acts i. 6.

Such was the ignorance of Christ's apostles up to this time. Nor were their moral qualifications at all more adapted to their future work. We cannot dwell on this subject at any length. Nor indeed need we. For we all remember their sins and transgressions in their attendance on Christ — their faults towards one another — their abandonment of Him — their grievous unbelief. We remember their wranglings "who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"— how Peter denied his Lord— how, at His capture, all the disciples "forsook Jesus and fled"— how they all, except one, were absent from the cross, so far as appears from the Word of God making no mention of their presence — how they would not believe in His resurrection, though assured of it by chosen witnesses, who had absolutely seen Him and conversed with Him—and how one of them, Thomas, had even ventured to prescribe and lay down those very signs without which he would not believe at all in a risen Saviour[g]. These things are all quite familiar to us — these moral sins and delinquencies of the apostolic company: and thus it seems most abundantly and adequately proved how utterly unfit, up to this time, the apostles were, both in head, in heart, and in practice for that high mission, to which God had called them, for that work awaiting them: viz. that of uprooting heathenism, and planting, in its stead, Christianity on the earth.

[g] John xx. 25.

Let us now proceed to our second subject. This was—the perfect fitness of the apostles, after the promise of Christ had been fulfilled in them and for them. No words could possibly have raised more strong expectations of some great—inconceivably great—work to be done in their behalf than those of Jesus in the text. What a wonderful gift must that be, honoured with a title no less magnificent than "the Promise of the Father!" Moreover, the apostles had been told that they were to go and baptize all nations — to proclaim that Gospel unto every creature—to preach repentance and remission of sins unto all people — and yet they were not to move out of the city where they then were, nor to commence their mighty undertaking, until furnished and qualified from heaven in some new and superhuman mode expressed by the words, "endued with power from on high." Ten days elapsed. The infant church of Christ had dwelt together in faith and love, and anticipation of the great coming event. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come," all the apostles, at least, "were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance[h]." Then they were turned into new men as to all knowledge of divine things, and specially of those things concerning the Lord, His gospel, and His kingdom. Then they were turned into new men as to all graces

[h] Acts ii. 4.

and gifts, whereby Jesus should be glorified, and souls delivered from God's wrath and judgment. Then immediately we find Peter standing up, expounding the Scriptures, and charging the people with their sin in crucifying Jesus. And God honours the word of exhortation: for, on the same day, there were added to the church no less than three thousand souls. And soon Peter and John shewed forth the new power and the new character too wherewith God had enriched them. They healed the lame man at the gate of the temple: and then told the people without fear "whose name, through faith in His name, had given Him his perfect soundness in the presence of them all[i]." And when they were brought up before the council, and charged, in high penalties, "not to speak at all nor teach on the name of Jesus," their noble declaration was; "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard[k]." See James also, soon slain as a martyr—a willing martyr, no doubt—by Herod's sword! Listen to the preaching of all the apostles, whenever they had to preach:—or recall their writings on the most sublime truths concerning heaven and eternity and the soul, which the Spirit enabled them to write for our learning in their Epistles—and just remember that these marvellous acts were merely samples

[i] Acts iii. 16. [k] Acts iv. 20.

of all their knowledge, all their utterances, and all their deeds. And thus you will clearly see that as before the apostles had been endued with power from on high they were utterly unfit for their high mission, so, after that mighty visitation, their fitness was complete in all things, through the power of Almighty God.

Now this history is not only important to us, as history, (called upon and bound as we are to study with attention, and to make our own all which concerns the establishment of Christ's church,) but it also teaches us many practical lessons for ourselves. By it we are taught our own incapacity (even though placed most advantageously) to grasp or comprehend the truth, concerning spiritual things, without the help and the power of God the Holy Spirit. Of His extraordinary gifts we have no need, but of those termed ordinary all of us have need, and all partake of them who are brought to salvation. And happy will it be for us, if this conviction and remembrance leads us to cast ourselves unreservedly on Him for guidance and light, and power on our hearts and lives.

Again, we may learn, from the passage under review, that we must often wait the Lord's time for Him to employ us in any specific work, and to lead us forth in any undertaking howsoever excellent. "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure" is indeed a command requiring our attention with all due submission. And here I speak to the

true servants of Christ, as those were to whom He spoke the words. We very often form plans — and good plans too — in our own mind, as David did when he would have built the temple; but God willed it otherwise. He had decided that another should erect it. So the Lord allots to His people their separate work, and it is that which they are to perform, however humble it may be, and, at times, however contradictory to their own inclination, taste and will. But if it is their calling and their duty, let them adhere to it! Let them avoid all spiritual restlessness! Let them shew forth the praises of the Lord, and true vital earnest religion in their own circle and sphere, however small and seemingly insignificant! God's blessing will attend them. God will not forget them. God will honour them. Their self-denial, patience and perseverance is all lying open and visible before Him. He will be more pleased with their small portion of accomplished work, well done from love to their Saviour, in their family, among their friends, and in behalf of a few poor fellow-creatures, than with a vast amount of attempted work, but done imperfectly, and without the manifest call and direction of God. It seems to me that these thoughts and these remembrances cannot be without value and encouragement to many true servants of Christ—and let us be well assured that the words of the Saviour, expressed in parable, but conveying the most actual truths and

realities, shall in some way or other, and at some time or other, be most gloriously fulfilled—I mean the promise that they who had been faithful in a "few things shall be rulers over many things," shall enter into the joy of their Lord," and have all honour, glory, and blessing as their own for ever.

SERMON XXV.

JESUS EATING WITH HIS DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS.

JOHN XXI. 13.

Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

IN considering this text, I shall first notice those special circumstances leading to that act of our Lord and Saviour about which it tells; secondly, the blessed truths which it conveys to us, as to the Person of our risen Lord, and as to His love and disposition towards us in that risen body, which is His now, and shall be His for ever. May the Holy Spirit make these things profitable to us, for the glory of Jesus Christ, and for our own present and eternal good!

Before He was taken prisoner by His enemies, Jesus had said to His disciples, "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee[a]." And again, the angel had said to the woman at the sepulchre, "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that

[a] Matthew xxvi. 32.

He is risen from the dead: and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him[b]." And Jesus Himself had commanded that they "should go into Galilee, and there they should see Him[c]." The disciples obeyed. They went into Galilee: and this twenty-first chapter of St. John gives an account of one of those instances, in which the promise, just quoted, was fulfilled.

We accordingly find that the apostles were again assembled in that very neighbourhood where Jesus had first gathered them together as His witnesses. They were on the borders of that very lake (sometimes called the sea of Tiberias, at other times the sea of Galilee) where some of them had so often pursued their trade as fishermen, and had been employed in this special calling at the time of their summons to become the followers of Christ. It appears that seven of them were abiding together, or at all events holding frequent intercourse between one another. We first hear of Simon Peter declaring his intention to "go a fishing." The rest propose to accompany him. And they acted rightly. The season had not yet arrived when they were to go forth in the power of the Holy Ghost for their one object of preaching the Gospel, and doing that special work, in the name of the Lord, on which their whole lives were to be afterwards spent. Now they were to live and act after the ordinary course of their former days. Nor are

[b] Matt. xxviii. 7. [c] Matt. xxvi. 32.

we to suppose that as yet they had any clear view of the grand and glorious work before them; although, even if they had, this would not have rendered the pursuit of their calling in the least unsuitable. St. Paul, we may remember, worked with his own hands; and the precepts of the New Testament abundantly provide against people making their religion any excuse either for idleness or eccentricity of life. Rome has done this with her monks and nuns, but all that system is against God's holy Word. The disciples went out fishing in the lake. But were they successful? By no means. The thought of going forth to fish appears to have been one which Peter abruptly announced. Perhaps it arose from favourable weather, or from some sign on the lake giving promise of fish in abundance; but, whether it was so or not, "that night they caught nothing." A valuable lesson this! The true servants of the Lord Jesus Christ are taught hereby that they must expect the ordinary failures and disappointments of life — that their high and glorious privileges, of a spiritual kind, do not exempt them, by any means, from such trials, contingencies and failures even in rightful designs and pursuits. Yea, further still. God often keeps them wanting what they desire, and, for a time, withholds it, that His own hand may be seen and acknowledged as the source of their supplies, as the Giver from heaven of those very gifts which they like others need while in the body here, and not yet reigning amidst the abundance of all

things. There are nights in which they catch nothing. In the morning their nets are at once filled, that it may be evident, as "the Lord's doing, and marvellous in their eyes."

"That night they caught nothing." They toiled in vain. But when "the morning was now come" —and morning, in Scripture, is ever the type of all that is bright, beautiful, and heavenly—"when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." Their eyes were holden, as the eyes of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, who could not recognise the Lord until the last moment of their interview. Their eyes were holden, as the eyes of Mary, when she saw Jesus in the garden, but took Him for the gardener. So their eyes were holden even at the present time. Jesus called to them, and asked, whether they had any meat — which, I believe, means, any fish caught. And when they answered, No, He bade them cast the net on the right side of the ship. They obeyed. Immediately their nets were so full that they could not draw them for the quantity which they had caught. St. John was now in all likelihood reminded of that very similar miracle, which he had himself witnessed on this very same lake, at the command of the very same voice[d]. Besides this, as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," he may have been endowed with that quick recognition of another, which love and peculiar intimacy gives. We all quickly re-

[d] Luke v. 6.

cognise the voice, the step, the demeanour, the form of one whom we love. Accordingly, St. John (or, as he is so affectionately called, "that disciple whom Jesus loved") saith unto Peter, "It is the Lord." And this recognition by St. John, as the first one to make it, is just what we might expect from his whole character and history. But another apostle immediately displays his own special and distinguishing character. Directly that St. John gave this intimation, "Peter did cast himself into the sea," impatient to be with the Lord, and, in all likelihood, remembering, quick as thought could bring it to his mind, who it was that once bade him come to Him upon the water, and who sustained him, at the time of his fears, with outstretched arm amidst the boisterous waves.

The other disciples follow in their boat. All are soon on shore in the presence of Jesus. There they saw preparation all ready made for a meal in his company. They saw a fire of coals, and "fish laid thereon, and bread." In addition to this provision Jesus bade them bring some of the fish which they had now caught. They obey. Jesus then saith to them, "Come and dine:" and according to His former custom takes the bread, and the fish likewise, and eats with them. And this part of the narrative concludes with the declaration, "This is now the third time that Jesus shewed Himself to His disciples after that He was risen from the dead"—that means (we may conclude) the third time that He shewed

Himself to them gathered together in such a company.

Such is the simple account of this appearance of our Lord in the body of His resurrection. Such is one among the many "infallible proofs" by which "He shewed Himself alive to them after His passion," during the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension, meeting them at intervals, and speaking "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" We see that the special act to which Jesus here called His disciples was that of eating or dining together with Him. For this, He Himself, in His condescending love, had made full preparation. To this He specially invited them, saying, "Come and dine." And this invitation was one which, rightly understood, conveys most attractive truths, and thoughts well adapted indeed to comfort and gladden our hearts. When Jesus lived upon earth, He lived as the "Son of man." Although perfect God, He would not live apart and distinct from man. No! He was one with His people. He called them His friends. He treated them as brethren. Though "holy, and harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" in His own essential dignity and excellency, still He lived with man on the most familiar terms. He—as He expresses it Himself, when contrasting His own demeanour and life with that of John the Baptist in his stern eccentricity—He, the Saviour, came "eating and drinking." That is, He mingled

with men in the ordinary course of daily and social life. He shewed among them His own bodily wants, as similar to theirs. He sympathized with them in their homes and families. He acted as the brother and the friend—not as the mighty potentate, over them, above them, unapproached, and unapproachable. No! Just on the contrary! We find Him at the marriage supper in Cana of Galilee. We find Him sitting down at Levi the publican's, who, on his conversion, made for Him a "great feast." We find Him eating the passover with His disciples—one, whom He loved, leaning on His bosom. Yea, it is written how desiringly He desired to eat of that passover with them before He suffered. In all ages and in all countries, invitations to repasts and meeting at repasts, are a mark of friendship and intimacy—of a desire to shew and interchange the offices of good-will. Joseph, when he saw Benjamin with his other brethren, "said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon[e]." In which there is a type of that very subject on which we are this day engaged. Therefore it is not without a rich and deep meaning that we are enabled to behold our gracious and condescending Lord so often sitting at meat with His disciples. It is not without a rich and deep meaning that so many of His discourses were delivered at the meals of which He partook with them. It is not without

[e] Genesis xliii. 16.

a rich and deep meaning that so many acts done by Him and connected with Him took place on such occasions. Every such repast at which He was present Himself, every such discourse, and every such act, not only declares His love, but also more explicitly declares His intimate union with His people whom He loves. And never, till we feel and experience this union and communion with Him, can we love Him and trust Him as we ought, and as it is our privilege to do. Oh! may we experience with all confidence and peace and joy that we are brought nigh to Christ, and made one with Him, made His own for ever! Precious indeed, when rightly felt, are those promises and declarations of our Saviour: "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb[f]:" "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom[g]:" "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me[h]."

But to proceed. We know that one of our Saviour's most evident purposes, during the forty days between the resurrection and ascension, was this, to shew by many and infallible proofs that He was the very "same Jesus" as He had been before, so far as His human nature was concerned, and in His disposition towards us. Hence the Lord Jesus sat down to meat with the two disciples whom

[f] Rev. xix. 9. [g] Matt. xxvi. 29. [h] Rev. iii. 20.

He met on the way to Emmaus. Hence, as in St. Luke, He asked for food, and did eat before them[i]. Hence He ordered Thomas to reach forth his hand, and feel the wounds in His side and hands. Hence, when He was taken up into heaven from mount Olivet, ascending in the midst of His chosen witnesses, the two men in white apparel gave their sure testimony: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven[k]." Now, viewed in this light, how much significance there is in Jesus appearing on the shore (as we have seen now) preparing the repast for His beloved servants, bidding them "come and dine," and taking bread, and giving it, and fish likewise! Surely this was a transaction of no ordinary kind! It is full of spiritual meaning! It tells us, in act and deed, that, although Jesus was now risen from the dead—although the day of His sufferings and humiliation were now for ever passed away —although He was now so soon to ascend to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God—yet still He bore in His heart, and displayed in His actions, the very same brotherly love towards man which was in Him before during His sojourn on earth. It shewed that He would not have us keep at a distance from Him, but would draw us and attach us to Himself in

[i] Luke xxiv. 41–43. [k] Acts i. 11.

all the ties of humanity—not less than rule us by the authority which, as God, is His towards the creatures of His hand. Thus was it spoken in act and deed when Jesus, in His risen body, said to His disciples, "Come and dine," and took of the bread and of the fish likewise.

Nor is this all. For a similar course of thought will supply us with blessed truths drawn from the word of Scripture itself regarding the union of Christ with His people at the day of His future glory and in the coming eternity. We have often looked upon Jesus as mingling so familiarly and lovingly with His people, in the days when He dwelt among them on the earth before His crucifixion. We have now considered Him as shewing Himself to them in precisely the same character after He had risen from the dead. And what now remains but for us to be assured that He will also be just the same towards us in the coming day of His revealed majesty—or rather to rejoice that this is assured and secured to us by His own promises, which never—never can fail? If I have been led aright in treating our present subject, then it will be clearly seen how much important truth is contained in the promises of Christ, that His people should eat and drink with Him in His kingdom and at His table—that many should come from the east and from the west to sit down at the feast where He Himself would be present. If thus received, what can be more cheering and delightful than the Saviour's ex-

press declaration of this kind, repeated again and again? These promises have yet to be fulfilled in all their exactitude, in all their glory. But they shall be fulfilled. Not one of them shall lack sure accomplishment. Jesus glorified will be the Lord and Host of our festival to come. His glorified saints shall be the honoured guests. What a prospect is here! Even among men, whoever rightly receives and entertains his guests makes it his business and his pleasure too that all should go on happily for them all, so far as he can promote it. He sees that nothing should incommode any one of them during the hours of their stay under his roof, and while partakers of entertainment there. How much more sure will it be that our almighty Saviour and Friend, who delights in presenting Himself in the office of the great Host and Master of the feast to His church of saved souls—how much more sure, I repeat, will it be for Him to keep all His happy guests, the inmates of His own mansion, from all imaginable evil, and to enrich them with all imaginable blessedness! They shall not lack any thing that is good. They shall be satisfied with the presence of their Lord. They shall behold His face in righteousness. In a most special manner He will be their God, and they will be His people, children of God's family in heaven, named after Himself. They will then know even as they are known. Their love will then be perfected towards God and towards one another; and how

much happiness there is in love! With them shall be associated the "innumerable company of angels." And then shall be fulfilled in them and for them all that honour and that joy which the richest banquet ever spread, the most illustrious company ever met together, and the courtesy, bounty, and care of the most loving and accomplished host could no more provide, than the light of a taper in a man's hand could equal the light of the sun when shining in its strength. Nevertheless, Jesus our Saviour has graciously employed the type of an earthly feast to teach us about the eternal festival of heaven, and the type of an earthly host to teach us about Himself. Let us mark and enjoy these glad similitudes! And when we hear Him inviting His disciples, and saying, "Come and dine," after he had risen from the dead; and when we see them thus gathered with Him in all the endearing familiarity of love, let us learn and receive the full lesson thus conveyed. Let us rejoice in that Lord and Saviour, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever in His heart and spirit to His church and to every member thereof! God grant that none of us may be dead, dark, and cold on these subjects —that none of us may shut up our hearts to a sense of that Saviour's love; but, on the contrary, may it abound more and more within us! "He that loveth not knoweth not God." May we know, feel, and appreciate His wondrous love as our Redeemer, and His condescension in making

Himself as one with us. And if this be our spirit here, it is a sign that we shall possess and enjoy eternally those unspeakable realities of blessedness which shall be the portion of every guest received into heaven's courts, as loved by Jesus, and washed in His blood, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and to be glorified even for evermore!

SERMON XXVI.

JESUS CONFIRMING HIS WORD AND GOSPEL.

MARK XVI. 19, 20.

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

EVERY event in our Lord's history claims from us the most close, constant, and grateful consideration. At the same time there were certain leading and prominent events even in that where all was incalculably important. For instance, our Saviour's birth, death, and resurrection. So it is with another of these grand events, viz. our Lord's ascension into heaven, when, after a final parting with His disciples, he went up from mount Olivet, forty days after his rising from the dead, and "was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God," as our Mediator. I shall make it my endeavour now to place before your eyes the peculiar circumstances in which the church of Christ stood at that precise

period; and may the Holy Spirit now rightly guide us and help us to form a clear and comprehensive view of these Divine things!

First of all let me observe, that God's ways are not as man's ways; and this is shewn in the duration of time occupied by Him in effecting His great plan for the redemption of mankind through Jesus our Saviour. If a man purposes any vast work, its accomplishment often depends on its being done in the brief period of his own lifetime. But God ever liveth. To Him there is no such thing as time in the light of a bound or limit to His acts. Accordingly, His plan for saving and delivering mankind from the curse and the fall was one extending over very many ages and very many generations. It began to be exhibited in paradise itself directly that man sinned. It was represented in all the sacrifices, such as those of Abel, and of Noah, and of all who were taught in those days by the Spirit of God. It was carried onward in the call of Abraham, in the selection of one chosen nation, which should receive the Law, and of whom Jesus Himself, according to the flesh, should come. And the purpose of all this marvellous history, stretching over a period of four thousand years, was made fully manifest when Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem, sojourned for thirty years in the land of Judæa, and died for us at Jerusalem.

This, however, was the central point of God's work upon earth for the salvation of the souls of

men. Since our Lord's death near two thousand years more have elapsed, during all which time God has been acting on earth in and by His church; and though we know not the exact date, still much is to come connected with all this, on which I speak. Yes! much more; for Jesus will return in His glory, and establish His kingdom of peace, and restore all things, and glorify all the members of His church, that they may appear with Him in everlasting glory. All this yet remains, but all will surely be accomplished—yes, not less surely than that which God has already done; and then, but not till then, shall all the Divine purposes, for the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the salvation of man, be completely and openly manifest unto all the intelligent creatures which the universe contains.

I have spoken very briefly, but still I have gone over a wide field. Let us now retrace our steps, and fix our attention on one particular point of this mighty history!

There was a country, called in the Scripture by the name of the "pleasant land," or "the glory of all lands," where God had uprooted the depraved inhabitants, whose "iniquity was full," and where he had established His own people Israel, the "vine brought out of Egypt." Having there planted that chosen people, He had caused the temple to be built at Jerusalem, the capital of that country. Moreover, He had given to that nation His own law, with His ordinances and

Word, full of multiplied promises telling about a coming Redeemer, who should first suffer and then enter His glory. That prophesied Redeemer had now come—had lived among them above thirty years—had exercised His public ministry for three years—had gone about doing a succession of the most wonderful miracles, preaching doctrines superlatively glorious, being and claiming to be the very Son of God. But "this same Jesus" had been rejected by the nation at large, and abandoned, in His extremity, by all His disciples. He had been crucified between two thieves, even as a guilty malefactor, accursed in the sight of God and of man. Surely the devil now seemed to have triumphed. Surely man's hopes seemed now utterly cast away. Surely we cannot regard the sadness of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus otherwise than as a type of the universal gloom lying at that moment on the whole church of God.

But let us wait a little! Two nights pass with heaviness upon them. But "joy cometh in the morning." On the third day Jesus arose from the dead, bursting the bonds of death, because it "was not possible that He should be holden by them"—because His flesh was not to "see corruption." He rose from the dead—He shewed Himself alive after His passion unto many witnesses by many infallible proofs—eating with them—presenting His body to be handled freely, conversing with them at certain intervals. These meetings—some of which are written for us in

detail, and some of which we only are allowed to see as by a glimpse—took place in a period of forty days. Let us regard these days as now concluded, and mark that event which then occurred!

Jesus had commanded His chosen apostles that they should not depart from Jerusalem on their grand mission of preaching the Gospel until they had received the Holy Spirit—called by our Lord "the promise of the Father"—and until they were "endued with power from on high." They acted accordingly—and on the fortieth day after the resurrection Jesus was with them on the mountain side beyond the walls of Jerusalem. In that same ignorance which they continually shewed until the Holy Ghost came down upon them on the day of Pentecost, and though exercising faith in Jesus, still shewing the darkness of their minds, "they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" But Jesus, knowing how much was yet to be done, and how many long years were yet to elapse before that event, at once directed them to their own gifts and illumination now at hand, and to their allotted work for their own nation and for all nations upon earth. "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld and stood looking steadfastly toward heaven"—"gazing up into heaven"—"He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

We may remember that Jesus had said unto His disciples; "If ye loved Me ye would rejoice

because I said unto you, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I." Now what does that mean? For Jesus was equal to the Father in regard to His Godhead or Divinity. It meant, no doubt, that since He was "inferior to the Father, as touching His manhood," and had a certain work given and assigned by the Father to be performed by Him "for us men and for our salvation," so Jesus was now going to be freed from all the suffering of His humiliation, to re-enter His own proper glory, and from thence to send that Holy Spirit, by whom the greatness of the Father and His love to the Son should be specially made known to His church. I shall not now dwell on the honour and the majesty into which the Lord Jesus entered when He appeared in the heaven of heavens, heralded and welcomed by cherubim and seraphim, "Open ye the everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in." I shall not dwell on His ascension, as typified by the translation of Enoch and Elijah, nor on any other point, except that one especially connected with Christ's infant church at Jerusalem, and with God's almighty preparation for the extension of that church throughout the wide world. For this the descent of the Holy Spirit was indispensable—His descent with purposes quite unexampled, and with a power and effects never experienced before. But this Holy Spirit, in the will of God, as recorded for us in the Scripture, could not have been thus given and poured forth unless Jesus

had died, and risen, and ascended into heaven, as our Mediator, there to claim and shed down the Holy Ghost, obtained for His church, merited by Him, and received for His sufferings and on His ascension to the right hand of God. Now let no one be tempted to say that statements of this kind are too dogmatical—too positive expressions as describing the mysteries of God! All which I do, in making such statements as these, is just to observe and ascertain what God has revealed and told in His Word, and then to express them, if not in the very language of Scripture, at least in words bearing the same meaning. We hear, in the narrative of our Saviour's life, that then the Holy Ghost was "not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified[a]." But when He was glorified the Spirit was given in the manner described; and thus the promise of the Father was fulfilled in the Person and work of the Holy Spirit Himself on the day of Pentecost and ever since. For He is the abiding Spirit, the Guide and Administrator of Christ's church until He comes again in His own glory.

And truly this "ministration of the Spirit" was most glorious from its beginning, even as to the end it will be glorious too. Ten days elapsed from the parting of Christ with His apostles on the side of mount Olivet. Little as yet they knew of that wonderful message which they were to deliver, of that wonderful work which they were to accomplish, of the wonderful capacities

[a] John vii. 39.

with which, so soon, they were to be enriched. As yet they had nothing but faith to sustain them. If they looked to their country, all ranks had been just stained with the murder of Jesus their Lord. If they looked to their temple, Jesus had declared that ere long "not one stone thereof should be left on another." Small as yet was their company: and in it were none of the wise and the mighty after the wisdom and power of this present world. But their chief difficulty, after all, consisted in their own utter incapacity, either as to light or love, for preaching the Gospel unto every creature, and for doing all which they had to do. It is not for us to say how little or how much they knew at this time—how little or how much they felt; but it appears to me, that from the conduct of the apostles themselves, until the Spirit was sent down from heaven, and from the conduct of our Saviour's followers at large until that event, we cannot err in putting very low the state of their minds and the state of their hearts before the day of Pentecost, as compared with their state after that day. God, no doubt, advanced and held them up as much as He thought good: but the Holy Spirit, in a certain way, at a certain hour, and with certain effects, made the apostles and made the church of Jesus what they and it, as apostles and as a church, from henceforth were in the sight of God and man. All this was done on the day of Pentecost. Then God did His work quickly and mightily. Then the apostles were sensibly visited

by the Holy Ghost. Then a miracle was done for and in each of them. Then they were able to speak all sorts of languages. Then they were inspired to preach a crucified, risen, and ascended Lord. Then, at their preaching, multitudes were convinced and gladly received the Word and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then "they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." Then took place their wonderful acts told of in that Book, which might be called the "Acts of the Holy Ghost:" and, since Jesus not only prayed for them, but also for those "who should believe on them through their word," so the joyful sound of the Gospel was heard by other ears; and it reached other hearts; and other tongues now forwarded the glorious invitation, that men should repent and believe in Jesus, and receive a full, free, and eternal remission of their sins. And near two thousand years have since flowed on, but God has kept the light of the Gospel alive. He has not suffered the sound to die away; and we, I trust, are walking in this light. I trust that the joyful sound has reached the depths of our heart with power from on high. The Word of the Lord is still and ever shall be the one great and essential instrument which the Spirit employs for bringing us fallen creatures into the kingdom of God. "Faith" (as it is written) "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God[b]." With-

[b] Romans x. 17.

out knowing Jesus, as revealed in that Word, no one can believe in Him. Without believing in Him no one can be saved. And when this Word is really and truly received — when it is brought with power into contact with any soul, then "signs follow them that believe." Yes! invariably. They are not endowed with miraculous gifts, like those of raising the dead or walking on the sea, but they are endowed with graces, gifts, habits, tastes, feelings, interests and conduct of life, which are really just as much the signs and the tokens of God's presence and power. For without Him such gifts never could have been theirs. Old things pass away. All things are made new. Oh! may these signs be more and more manifest among us, not as the grounds of our pardon— not as our title for acceptance with God (for that is all to be found in Jesus exclusively,) but as fruit acceptable to God: and thankful shall I be if I should lead any to see more clearly and more joyfully how unspeakably they are indebted to the ascension of Christ Jesus our Lord for the Holy Spirit and for all His goodly graces and gifts!

SERMON XXVII.

CHRIST THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 22, 23.

As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming.

IN another of the Epistles it is written that, "if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." This language just corresponds with the text. All the seed of Adam—that is, all mankind—springing and descending from him, "according to the flesh, as their one common ancestor, have been subject to death, in him and through him. Death has passed, as a sentence, on them all. No man has lived, is living now, or shall live, not liable to death, till the Lord comes in His glory. And in the same way—to present a truth not less blessed than the last stated truth is painful to hear — all the seed of Jesus Christ who are born again through Him as the life of

their souls, and taken, through Him, into the saved family of God, are delivered from death, as to their souls, and must and will have everlasting life. May the Holy Spirit guide, instruct, and enliven us with all gladness of heart, while I would aim at explaining and illustrating the text!

I shall dwell, first, on the sure promise of God's Word, that, "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive:" secondly, on the order and the course in which the resurrection of Christ and His members shall be accomplished, "every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming."

First, then, we have the promise, "that in Christ all shall be made alive," that is, of course, all believers in Him, all His true disciples. I scarcely need delay to prove that all those who neglect or reject the Gospel, who remain in the death of trespasses and sins until the end of their lives, and die without Christ, only rise again to the "resurrection of damnation" (as the Lord has so fearfully styled it) previous to the "second death" of body and soul in hell. When Jesus was on earth, and just about to call forth Lazarus from his grave, He thus spoke of Himself: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die[a]." And again, He spake of Himself, not less clearly, though in symbol and type; "Except a corn of wheat fall into the

[a] John xi. 25, 26.

ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it beareth much fruit[b]"— it riseth again, not merely as a single grain, but as bearing on its stalk a multitude of grains, thirty, or sixty, or eighty, or an hundredfold. That is, Jesus was to die first; then rise again; then to live for the salvation of man, and bring many sons unto glory.

Now this life, granted to every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, is of a double character. First there is spiritual life, given to him in this present world, through the Holy Ghost, the "Author and Giver of life." Had it not been for the death of Jesus, for His resurrection, and for His ascension, no one in the world ever could have had any effectual call from the Holy Spirit —never could have had the Holy Spirit come with enlivening power to his heart. And the benefit of Christ's death acted retrospectively for all the saints, who knew and served the Lord, and died in faith before His coming in the flesh. So they had the Spirit, for all that was essential to their salvation. For that Holy Spirit was the "Promise of the Father" promised to the Son on account of His sufferings for our sake. And all who have been, are, or shall be saved, must partake of the Holy Ghost.

Thus we see that, so far as their inward spirit is concerned, all saved souls are "made alive to God," during the days of their pilgrimage and sojourn on earth. Divine grace visits them. Divine grace changes them from the image and

[b] John xii. 24.

example of the old man Adam into the image and example of the new, righteous man, even Jesus Christ. Divine grace makes them new creatures, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained that they should walk in them[c]." And "henceforth they do not live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again[d]." And not only is this present world *a* place and opportunity for this work being done in them, but it is the *one* only and exclusive place or opportunity: for utterly vain is the notion, which some seem to cherish, in the unscriptural phantasy of their own brains, that after death spiritual life and heavenly tastes can possibly begin. It is impossible. All Scripture denies such a supposition as this. How speaks the Psalmist? "Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise Thee?"—that is, if they have never done so before—if their hearts have never been tuned to the sound of the Gospel in their life. And how speaks another holy and inspired king? "The grave cannot praise Thee. Death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day[e]." Therefore, if Jesus has given us spiritual life—if we have reason to feel and to experience, that feeble as our faith may be, and faint as our hope may be, and cold as our love may be, still, still, those

[c] Ephes. ii. 10. [d] 2 Cor. v. 15. [e] Isaiah xxxviii. 18, 19.

graces have had their beginning in us, and are really alive within us now—that the light of the truth is alive, though not shining or burning, by any means, as we could desire—oh! let us then take courage! Let us exceedingly rejoice, and let us bless and praise our God and Saviour, that He has enabled us to know the day of our visitation, and not left us in death and in darkness and in the sure way to ruin and destruction of body and soul in hell! For it is not our own work. It is not any man's or any minister's work, except in a subordinate degree, as mere instruments in Christ's mighty hand. It is the work of Jesus Himself, by His Spirit: and it is assured to us in His own Word, when He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also:" and again, because it is written, as in the language of our text, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

A few words more in regard to the spirit of the true believer in Christ. And then we shall have to think of his body too. That shall not be forgotten. That shall be made alive. But his spirit once quickened by the Holy Ghost—that never dies. Over that, death has no dominion at all. His body may be racked with pain, paralysed, or prostrated with any sudden attack of disease. Death may absolutely have it in its grasp. But the spirit never dies at all—no, not for one single instant. On quitting this body of sin and of death—on leaving its tenement of clay (no poetic expression, but a real and Scriptural truth) it is "with the Lord." On being delivered from the

burden of the flesh, it is with Him, who said, (as in His Word of noble and divine authority,) even to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." And there he, doubtless, was in rest and in peace, though his body remained a mangled corpse on the earth, cast into the pit, where the bodies of criminals all lay together. "To depart" (saith the apostle) "and to be with Christ is far better[f]"—that is, far better and far happier than all the prosperity which the whole world, if your own, could heap upon you. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours[g]." The Scripture speaks not of their unconsciousness: but it speaks of their rest. And how enjoyable is rest, after fatigue, perhaps all of us can in some measure tell. And of all things, perhaps, rest of spirit, after the spirit has been long tried and tossed and disturbed, is the most delightful. I, for one, doubt not that the rest of sainted and departed spirits is a rest full of conscious bliss, after the toil, and the turmoil, and the sorrows, and the separations, and, above all, the sense of sin, and the strife against it in this present evil world.

Thus much concerning the spirit of every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, as to the new life, bestowed from heaven above, during his abode upon the earth, and as to his life, on quitting the body, and departing to be with Christ. But we must remember that this whole chapter

[f] Phil. i. 23. [g] Rev. xiv. 13.

(from which the text comes) especially treats of the resurrection of the body. To that subject we will now proceed.

In Christ shall every believer be made alive once more, as to the body and the flesh. "This mortal must put on immortality. This corruption must put on incorruption." "As we have borne the image of the earthy"— that is Adam —"so we shall bear the image of the heavenly"— that is, even Jesus Christ. But it will be better not to anticipate that, which we must presently consider again in detail, when we speak according to the text and tell of those who rise at Christ's coming. Therefore, I shall now enter at once on the second head of my sermon: and in noticing the order and the course, in which, respectively, Jesus and His people rise, we shall see how all is appointed in due and regular succession—how "every man is to be in his own order; Christ the firstfruits: afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming."

"Christ the firstfruits!" Consider that expression for a moment — that remarkable title of the Lord Jesus Christ. To understand it at all, as is the case with so many other of His titles, and so many other spiritual truths, we must go back from the New Testament to the Old—must understand the ordinances given to the Jews, and so learn for ourselves the still more glorious lesson they contain, as lit up, and explained, and endued with power and life, through Him in whom all types and all ceremonies were to the utter-

most fulfilled, and without whom they would have had no meaning at all.

The firstfruits were offerings, solemnly made to God, out of the harvest and productions of the earth, at two different seasons. They were offered, when the crop became fit for gathering, previous to its being gathered: and they were offered again when the crop was gathered in, before people were to make any personal use of those gracious gifts of the earth, which the Lord God Almighty had again bestowed upon them. Many ceremonies were appointed to accompany these solemn offerings; and all were to denote thankfulness to God, and acknowledgment of Him, as the sole Giver of every good gift. And every offering thus made, in faith, was accepted by God; and, it being accepted, the Israelites were then at liberty to use and enjoy the riches and bounty of the earth with all freedom of spirit and all gladness of heart. This offering of a portion to God sanctified all the rest. Being accepted, it assured them of God's favour in the use of all that was given—also of that favour being continued, from His fatherly and most bounteous hand, in coming years. Thus too, Jesus, the great living antitype of all this, died, and was put for a season in the grave, to lie like the seed in the earth. But in His body there was nothing which death could long hold. "His flesh saw no corruption." Soon—very soon—even the third day, He rose again — rose, not for Himself alone, but rose, according to that type and

illustration which he chose for Himself[h], I mean a seed of corn—rose, for multitudes too, in addition to Himself. "He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." He was the "first-begotten from the dead," not, you see, the only one, but the first, after whom others should come. He rose, manifesting unto all creation, which could witness or hear of His resurrection, that He was accepted of the Father in the person of man; that He, who had taken upon Him our flesh, had redeemed and had sanctified it, and that all who believe in Him should be sanctified in their bodies too, and rise again unto eternal life. If the firstfruits were holy, then, in the will and purposes of God, the whole harvest should be holy too, and in due season should be gathered safe into the garner of God, to be His living property even for ever and ever. Here, here is our hope! Here is our confidence! Here is the type fulfilled! Here is the type explained in the resurrection of Christ. Thus Christ is the firstfruits.

The "order" proceeds. Christ's people shall rise, no less surely than He has already risen from the dead. One event is of the past. The other event is of the future. Both are equally sure. No man as yet, of all Adam's fallen race, has died and risen again, and so gone to heaven. Carefully observe this! Enoch and Elijah were translated—that is, were taken up to glory without dying at all. So we need not consider them.

[h] John xii. 24.

But again, there are instances in the Old Testament of people miraculously brought back from death, as the widow's son, who revived on Elijah's prayer; and as the dead man, who stood upon his feet alive when he touched Elisha's bones. And again, our Lord Jesus Christ restored three dead persons to life during his stay on the earth—one just dead—the second laid on his bier, and carried forth to his burial—the third, one who had lain in his grave no less than four days, and whom, in that hot clime, corruption had no doubt seized. But the point to be remembered is, that of all, except perhaps Moses[i], who really and absolutely died, not one, no not even those on whom these miracles were done, passed away from the world into glory, or rose from the dead, no more to die. They lived again on earth for a season—we know not how long—and then they died like other men; and the body of the widow's son, and the body of him who arose on touching Elisha's bones, and the body of the daughter of Jairus, and the body of the young man of Nain, and the body of Lazarus, have all seen corruption, and are now like all other bodies which have died in ancient times. Man knows not where the particles or where the remnants are in which is the germ of future life

[i] I say, *perhaps*, because I do not wish to speak dogmatically here. The difficulty arises from his appearance at the transfiguration. The case also of those who arose from the grave after the resurrection of Jesus, and appeared unto many, will probably recur to mind

and immortality, but God Almighty does: and if they are Christ's, they, with all others who belong to Him, shall rise again to glory on the resurrection day. In them, as in all others among Adam's fallen children, the order was to be preserved—"Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming."

Truly the Lord Jesus will return again! The word which He spake unto His people was; "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God[k]." "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him[l]." But without stopping now to dwell here on His matchless glory, as to be revealed on that day, let us see what will be its consequence unto His people and His saints: for here again we must pass by its consequences to the wicked, as that would interfere with our present subject. The consequence will be the resurrection of the saints unto everlasting honour and blessedness. God's word of power will then say to them, "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: come, My people[m]." "The dead in Christ shall rise first." As Adam was made of the dust of the earth, and into his body God breathed, and made him a living soul, so, too, but far more gloriously, shall the dust and remains of each child of God once more revive, immortal and incor-

[k] 1 Thess. iv. 16. [l] Rev. i. 7. [m] Isaiah xxvi. 20.

ruptible. The spirit shall be reunited unto the body once more; and then shall the saying which is written come to pass to the very uttermost: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ; and they shall reign with Him a thousand years[n]:" and when those thousand years shall have ended, an eternity of blessedness will be before them still. And thus shall be fulfilled the infallible truths of our text—"As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming."

I have now ended what I undertook concerning the doctrinal part of our text. Let us see that such mighty doctrine has its due practical effect! It is remarkable to see how every doctrine and truth, as to the Person and life of our Lord Jesus Christ, is connected in Scripture with practical duties and privileges as to ourselves. If we hear of Him as our dying Saviour, it is not only for us to contemplate Him as such in theory, but also we are commanded to "die unto sin." And so if we hear of Him as rising from the dead, we are addressed as those who are "risen with Christ," and therefore are to "seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God[o];" seek to be, as our Lord expresses it, worthy of the resurrection! They who were last at the cross and first at the grave

[n] Rev. xx. 4. [o] Col. iv. 1.

—the women who sought to do honour to their Master and Lord in all true fidelity and love—they went to anoint Him, though they could not help anxiously inquiring how the stone should be rolled away from the door of the sepulchre. Still they went forward in their holy work. "And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre." Why? Because their Lord was now risen indeed. That was the cause. If, therefore, we also seek a risen and glorified Lord—if we love Him, and would do Him honour, nothing shall arrest us in our path: and as He met those who loved Him and sought Him as a risen Saviour, and said to them, "All hail!" so He will meet us, and cheer us, and enable us to feel and experience the power of His resurrection as our joy, and to serve Him faithfully all the days of our life.

SERMON XXVIII.

JESUS REMOVING ALL CONDEMNATION.

ROMANS VIII. 1.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

IT is very necessary that we should understand the true meaning of those peculiar words which God employs in the Scripture for conveying to us important doctrine and truth. Many persons do not comprehend them at all; and some go so far as to have an objection to them, and to be displeased when addressed in the very terms which the Scripture contains. They say they are too technical and mysterious. Many too live on from year to year without any very distinct apprehension of what is meant by such expressions as "the fall," the "old man and new man," a "death unto sin," the "new birth," "grace," "justification," and "sanctification," and by many other terms of continual use in God's Word, and needful to be continually used by all preachers, howsoever plain and simple they may be in their phrase-

ology. I preface my sermon with these few observations, because neither the text, nor, indeed, can half the chapter whence the text comes, be understood or applied unless it is clearly seen what is scripturally meant by such expressions as being "in Christ Jesus," and being "in the flesh," and "walking after the flesh," or being "in the Spirit," and "walking after the Spirit." But of these we will speak consecutively. Being "in Christ Jesus" is the first saying of the text, describing true Christians on their way to heaven. They are "in Christ Jesus" who are not only Christians by name and profession, but by an inward change effected by the Holy Spirit in the mind and heart and all the inward faculties. They are joined to Jesus, as spiritual members of His spiritual body, by a true and lively faith, and thereby they receive spiritual virtue, life, and power from Him. In a word, all such are "new creatures, created again in Christ Jesus unto good works" —and this is a fact not less real and less actual, because altogether spiritual, than the existence of the air around is a fact, though we do not see it, or than the existence of a feeling or a thought is a fact, not less than the motion of a limb.

Few words have more meaning than this expression, "the flesh." There is the common flesh of our bodies. Again, it expresses relationship: "Let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh[a]." It means mankind in general, and such help as he can give: "Cursed

[a] Genesis xxxvii. 27.

be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm[b]." It means all that is outward, visible, tangible, ceremonial in religion. "If any other man" (saith St. Paul) "thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more[c]." And he proceeds to describe all his national and ceremonial privileges: "Circumcised the eighth day—of the stock of Israel," &c. One meaning more demands our attention. And that is the one of the text and chapter before us now. The flesh here means "the whole nature of man, as it cometh into the world, corrupt, vile, and infected with sin. "They that are in the flesh," i. e. in a carnal, corrupt state—as yet unchanged, as yet unconverted, as yet in the likeness of Adam, but not in the likeness of Christ, "born after the flesh and after the will of man," but not after the Spirit and after the grace of God. I do not know that I can give you a better explanation or definition of this important word; but I know very well that the teaching of the Holy Spirit can alone make you or me understand or apply it in any profitable way. For this is one of the "things of the Spirit:" and it is written, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned[d]." Let us look therefore unto that Spirit, who is the Author and Giver of all spiritual life, taste, and apprehension, that He may now be truly and really with

[b] Jer. xvii. 5. [c] Philip. iii. 4. [d] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

us, and teach us the grand truths concerning the flesh, as our source of danger, and concerning the Spirit, as the source of all which is safe, holy, and full of blessing! May God grant this for Christ's sake!

The text tells us that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." But the word "therefore," with which the verse begins, should send us back, for a little, to that which has gone before.

St. Paul there has been telling and opening out the very depths of his own personal experience. He has been describing his own state, as born again, and renewed, but still with the old nature acting against the new, though kept under by Divine grace. He describes the contest going on between the old and the new man. He tells of himself, as "delighting in the law of God after the inward man, but seeing another law" (or principle) "warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members[e]." But though feeling and experiencing all this, even to that strong and piercing exclamation, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" he could immediately add, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord"—and that not only for the pardon of all sin, coming to him through the Saviour, but also in the remembrance that grace coming through Jesus, and through

[e] Chap. vii. 23.

the Spirit, would habitually make the mind victorious over the flesh—keep the "law of God" habitually strong in him, and habitually overcome "the law of sin." Much of this doctrine and truth is clearly and strongly enforced in the ninth article of our church, where it is declared that the "infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh .... is not subject to the law of God." But this does not in the least interfere with the grand truth of the Gospel, viz. that "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," nor with the truth that the zeal, course, and habitual tenour of life in all true children of God is not after the flesh, but after the Spirit of God. And why or how? For this reason, because the mind, or inward man, being under grace from the Spirit of God, gets the better of the flesh, which, evil as it is in us all to the end, must still, God be praised, yield to the mightier Spirit of the most high God. Satan is against us. The world is against us. Our own corrupt fallen heart is against us. But God is for us, as His own children. And God is in us, sanctifying us by the Holy Spirit, "to the praise of the glory of His grace."

It has been often observed that this chapter begins with the blessed words "no condemnation," and ends with the blessed words "no sepation." Those upon whom there is "now no condemnation," are described in this verse, first, as "justified," which is represented by their being

"in Christ Jesus"—secondly, as "sanctified"—which is represented by their walking "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." There is no condemnation on them, because Jesus has taken all that away. He has made amends and atonement for their guilt. He has suffered, the righteous One for the unrighteous sinners, that He might bring them to God. The handwriting against them, telling the long score of their debts and trespasses, is blotted out clean from the eye of God in the Saviour's blood. Their sins are dead, as matters for judgment unto condemnation—not living and accusing things, but dead—nailed with Jesus to the cross. God, manifest in the flesh—God, taking our nature on Him, that He might suffer for our sakes, in His own infinite love, through redemption—God Himself has justified them. Therefore it is asked, triumphantly, in this very chapter, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Again, in the next verse, the thirty-fourth, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who ever liveth to make intercession for us." Jesus Christ came into the world for the very purpose of gathering a people to Himself out of that very world—a people who should not be condemned with the world, but be altogether and for ever saved, and introduced to everlasting glory. This is their heritage. And they are made partakers of it by faith. Believing in Jesus, they at once receive and have assured to

them all the immunities, benefits, and blessings which Jesus has obtained for their deliverance and eternal joy. They derive all unspeakable advantages due to His sufferings, due to His merits, due to His righteousness. To them it is at once said, as in the language of Jesus Himself, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"—as in the language of St. Paul, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's." Jesus Himself has summed up their blessedness in the mighty declaration of His own mouth: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life[f]." All this is their privilege, just because they are in Him. In Adam they died. They died too, personally, in their own trespasses. But in Jesus they are made alive. Nothing shall again slay them. They are grafted in Him, as branches in the True Vine—joined to Him, as living members in His own body—yea, more—they are made one with Him; surely as He prayed to the Father for all His people, "that they all may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us[g]." Oh! let us lay these joyful things to our hearts! Let us enjoy our safety from all condemnation, as it is our privilege! Let us see it coming just and entirely, but all abundantly and richly, because we are in Christ—and then it is impossible for us to feel too much assured—for

[f] John v. 24. [g] John xvii. 21.

the more assurance we have, if all derived, solely and exclusively, from our being "in Christ," the more we shall please, honour, and glorify God, recognising in Him the "strength of our salvation."

But, secondly, those on whom there is no condemnation are also described in the text as "walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Walking — i. e. going onwards — shewing themselves in their various proceedings before God, angels, and men — evident, like people in their walk abroad. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit:" if we have within us the principle of true life, let us manifest it in all our Christian demeanour! And such is the walk— such is the character of all God's true children. Jesus has Himself declared that "wisdom"— viz. the true, heavenly wisdom, which makes us wise unto salvation—is "justified"—proved to be such —"of all her children[h]." Let us see to it that we appreciate the truth and fact here! While there is no servant or disciple of Christ in the whole world, who lives up to the mark which he aims at — up to the standard of God's Word— up to the position which he ought to occupy in Christ's church — while every one of us, however advanced, must continually see, feel, lament and confess his own sins and his own constant imperfections, still there is another aspect of these things. That presents us a far fairer sight. That tells us that every one of God's own people,

[h] Luke vii. 35.

whether young or old, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, whoever he may be, does keep God's law—not by any means so as to be saved on this title or ground of desert, but still does keep God's law, as the rule and principle of his life, as an offering of holiness and righteousness, as the proof of his being in a state of grace and salvation. Every such one is "created again unto good works, which God has ordained that he should walk in them." If God has ordained this, how can it be otherwise? I just ask that plain question. All such hear, and, hearing, act upon God's own injunction, "Be ye also holy, for I am holy;" on the Saviour's Word, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." All such follow out God's blessed, everlasting decree, which St. Peter tells of them, that they "are elect unto obedience, as well as to the blood of sprinkling[i]"—unto the means and paths in which they walk to heaven, not less than to heaven as their final home. They now universally hate sin. Therefore they now can no more continue in it. They now see that sin is a tree bearing no fruit, but much poison — giving no wages but death — bringing no honour or glory with it, but shame and remorse and everlasting contempt. They now see that the flesh (in the sense which I gave you at the beginning) has not been their true friend (as they once held it) but their cruel enemy — that they are debtors to it for much evil—that it must not be served, pampered, and obeyed, but mastered,

[i] 1 Peter i. 2.

kept down, crucified. In these things all Christians are agreed—agreed in their mind—agreed in their heart—agreed in their practice. In these things they are all united — yes, all one. "They walk not after the flesh." Their resolution—their deliberate aim — their habit is, in the strength of the Lord, neither to follow it nor be led by it. God saith to every one of them, "From Me is thy fruit found." God says of every one of them, "I have formed them for Myself. They shall shew forth My praise."

But as we are told how they do not walk, or go on, we are also told how they do walk and go on. They walk "after the Spirit." Instead of following in Satan's train, or after the multitude to do evil, or after the devices and desires of the natural, fallen, and corrupt heart, all those, who are on the way to heaven, are led by the Spirit as their Guide. Jesus made to them this promise as to the Holy Spirit, "He will guide you into all truth." The Spirit is bestowed on them as "the promise of the Father" to Jesus for them. He works mightily and effectually in them all — in their minds, enlightening them—in their hearts, shedding abroad the love of God in them — in all their faculties, sanctifying all of them, for the true service of their Saviour. He gives them His own witness that they are the children of God, whose honour and glory they seek in all true filial love. Formerly this was no object to them at all. Formerly, indeed, they scarcely could have comprehended what the glory of God meant,

much less aimed at it, much less lived for it, much less felt it a joy, no less than a command, to do His will in all things. They now regard and conduct themselves as members of that body whereof Jesus is the living Head. With that body—with all true, faithful followers of Jesus they now have sympathy, whereas once they had no sympathy at all with them — rather, perhaps, had a prejudice against them, thought them weak, dull, irrational, misguided, impracticable sort of men. All this is now changed. Now by one Spirit — not merely by outward baptism, but by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they are baptized into the body of Christ, and have been made to drink into one Spirit—into one cup of life and immortality. Now they live separate from the world, being well assured that the Scripture saith not in vain, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world[k]." "The friendship of the world is enmity with God[l]." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty[m]." Such are a few marks of those who "walk after the Spirit"—no doubt, only a few: but amply enough for us to try and test ourselves thereby. If they are wanting in us, then it must be feared that we have no share in the assurance of the text, though many, no doubt, have them really upon them, though they doubt it, and their doubts

[k] 1 John ii. 15. [l] James iv. 4. [m] 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

much trouble them. But if they are truly ours, then we cannot take it to ourselves with too much security, too much joy, and too much confidence.

Let me now just make one appeal to those who at once admit that they have no reason to believe that they are "in Christ," as the text expresses it, and who know very well that they are not living and walking after the Spirit of God. What shall I say to reach their conscience? I would represent to them what a fearful state they must be in, if even the weak portrait of their character, thus lightly sketched by a fellow-creature, shews them at once how they stand before the Lord — thus exposes the true condition of their souls—thus makes their likeness clear. Oh! let me persuade them, if met by these words, to give themselves to the Lord, who has made them, and died for them, without a moment's delay! Let them come to Jesus now out of their present state of condemnation and wrath! Let them come out of the enemy's country into that of their Friend and Saviour! Let them escape for their life, nor linger one instant longer! I have now put forth a few plain truths of God's Word. May the Spirit take them and plant them in some heart! I cannot enter there. He can. It is written, "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls." I continue the next verse, and say, "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like

unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was[n]." Many sermons are treated thus. They depict the careless. The picture is recognised, but the Scripture thus tells why it is of no effect. The Lord grant it may be otherwise now!

One word more for any one, who, although really a true servant of Christ, may be somewhat afraid to enjoy and appropriate the text in his own case. Such a one might perhaps do so with more facility and comfort, were it not for the part which tells it belongs to those, not only "in Christ," but also walking not "after the flesh but after the Spirit." Now they are perhaps afraid, or at least hesitating, thus to regard themselves. Truly that minister would indeed be a very chief among us, yes, a very wonder, who could so speak, as to enable every true believer, who may hear him, to know himself as such, and to go on his way assured, in full peace and rejoicing. This is altogether beyond human power. I have lately read, as the saying of a celebrated preacher, who was very much blessed in his ministry, that next to converting a soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, the most difficult thing was to make a converted soul know and recognise its own full blessedness. Yes, the fact is, that each work, like every spiritual work, must be done by the Holy Spirit alone, and exclusively, whomsoever He may use as His instrument. Therefore I most

[n] James i. 22—24.

earnestly desire for all the true servants of the Lord that He may enable them, not only to behold, in faith, what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do for them, but also what the Spirit has done, is doing, and will do in them. Each work is equally God's; one, in order that they may be justified, the other, in order that they may be sanctified! And each is done for every one who is saved. May we be enlightened to see all this clearly, and to feel all this with power from on high; and then the text must prove to us very full of peace and of gladness, telling us, as it does, that there is "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

SERMON XXIX.

OUR APPOINTMENT TO LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

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1 THESSALONIANS V. 9, 10.

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

THESE strengthening and cheering words are written for the appropriation of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We may, first, examine the preceding portion of Scripture, and trace out the course of doctrine which leads to the language of the text.

We may, secondly, consider our exemption and deliverance from God's wrath, assured in the declaration, that He has not appointed us to wrath.

We may, thirdly, consider our most favoured and happy condition, assured in the declaration, that God has appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, lastly, we may consider the fulness and blessedness of that salvation, through which, whether "we wake or sleep"—that is, remain on earth or depart from it—we are living with our Saviour now, and shall surely live with Him for ever.

For the subject which leads to the text we must look back to the thirteenth verse of the previous chapter, for it begins there. St. Paul, through the comforting Spirit, is offering consolation to those among his brethren and flock at Thessalonica, whose friends and relations had died since their conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ, leaving their survivors in sorrow and bereavement. Now what is the sort of consolation which, under these circumstances, God sends to all mourning Christians through His messenger St. Paul? It is consolation as different from any which man would ever have offered as light is from darkness, higher than any which man could have conceived, even as the heavens are higher than the earth. The consolation is this—that they should not sorrow "even as others, which have no hope," because, at the second coming of the Lord Jesus, He would bring with Him all His people who had died, or "slept" in Jesus, and because, at the same time, all the living and surviving of His church would be caught up, translated and glorified, "to meet the Lord in the air," where all would recognise one another, and be no more separated. Having thus spoken, the apostle concludes, as it is written in the last

verse of the fourth chapter, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

But St. Paul having once touched on that subject, ever so welcome to the early Christians—I mean our Saviour's return in His glory— St. Paul, I say, does not at once leave it, but in the fifth chapter continues the same subject. He tells the Thessalonian believers that they were not living in darkness, ignorance, and carelessness as to Christ's return, although they knew not the exact season. Addressing them as "children of the light and children of the day," he exhorts them to live even still more consistently with this character, in all sobriety and watchfulness, strengthened by faith and love, and having for an helmet the "hope of salvation." And why was that salvation theirs? "Because God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." And what were the benefits and privileges resulting from that state of salvation, whether in life or in death? "That, whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with Him."

We have, secondly, to pause a while on this first statement: "God has not appointed us to wrath." And we should surely bless and thank our God even for a statement like this. Surely we should welcome it with all thankfulness and joy, even were it not to go any further. Yes! when we consider the extent of our own sin, with its manifold aggravations—when we con-

sider the hardness of our hearts—the numberless instances in which we have rebelled against our Maker—the marvellous lack of love towards our Saviour, of which we all are guilty—the frequency with which we "grieve the Holy Spirit," our worldliness of spirit, our love of self intermixed with our best deeds—in a word, our total unworthiness, whether before or after our conversion, to be exempted from God's justice and wrath, we should indeed receive even this message, that "God has not appointed us to wrath," with unbounded gratitude and joy. I will not dwell on such a fearful matter; but oh! think one moment what our condition would be now, and what it would be hereafter, had it been otherwise—had it been appointed for us to live here in expectation of the fiery judgment and God's indignation even for ever and ever! But this—exactly this—would have been our present and everlasting condition, had it not been for the love of God in our redemption through Christ Jesus: "God hath not appointed us to wrath." And let no one think that he is so appointed even for an instant! Let not Satan so persuade you! Let not your heart tell you so! The word *despair* is only once found in Scripture. And then how does it come in? "We are perplexed, but not in despair." And if there should be any one terrified and oppressed by such thoughts, I hesitate not to say, that your very anxiety lest sentence of death should have gone out against you is, in all likelihood, itself a sign that you are not left to your-

self, that you are not hardened, that you shall yet enjoy the Gospel of peace and salvation as your own. May you this day, through Jesus, as your Advocate in heaven, and through the Spirit's help, lay hold of the declaration, that "God has not appointed you to wrath;" and never form such terrible thoughts again, but, on the contrary, thoughts worthy of the Gospel, thoughts of peace and joy in the "great salvation of God."

A glorious passage is before us now. He who is once convinced of his sin, and once made rightly acquainted with the holiness and justice of God, would, did he see no Saviour to save him, far prefer annihilation itself to appearance at God's judgment seat. Therefore, considering all our sins, even a deliverance from the Divine wrath, dark and gloomy as annihilation itself, would be a mercy and absolute boon to guilty creatures like ourselves. But this is not the manner with which God deals with us; and I hasten onward, to set forth the glad truth of the Gospel for all Christians. Hereby it is revealed, that He, who has not exerted, and will not exert His power to condemn us, has exerted and will exert His power to save us—that He, who "has not appointed us to wrath, has appointed us to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Yes! God the Father made the covenant with His beloved Son, that He should give Himself for us, and that we should be given to Him. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me"—saith the Lord. This covenant is one, "in all things or-

dered and sure." It cannot be broken. God is faithful. Jesus has paid the penalty of our sins, dying on the cross, and rising again for our free justification, "that God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus[a]."

Now, believing all this, we not only can enter into the spirit of that testimony, how "God hath not appointed us to wrath," but we can proceed infinitely further still, and can say with David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies[b]!" What a catalogue of blessings! Forgiveness of all sin—perfect health of soul—redemption and a crown—even the "crown of glory which fadeth not away!" And why are they all ours? "Not," (as it is written,) "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost[c]." These privileges become ours simply, solely, exclusively for this reason—God "hath appointed us to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." He "hath" (as written again) "chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the

[a] Rom. iii. 26. [b] Psalm ciii. 2—4. [c] Titus iii. 5.

praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved[d]." God says, first to Jerusalem, then to His church now, and then to every living member of the same; "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee[e]." Therefore God sends, during their short but momentous sojourn on this earth, His Holy Spirit unto all who are saved, that He may give them life in their souls, bring them into a new state altogether, lead them into a life of faith in the Son of God, and keep them in the path of holiness and righteousness, until they reach His heavenly kingdom. All is the work of God. Therefore it cannot fail. Every one of God's true children is appointed unto salvation by One all mighty to save; and unto whom the end is known from the beginning. Whosoever is justified by faith in Christ Jesus is also sanctified, and whosoever is sanctified shall assuredly be glorified. Strong is each link of this glorious chain! It unites earth to heaven. It joins the sinner, made righteous in Christ, to that Saviour who took away all his unrighteousness and sin. It holds us to Christ, the Anchor of our souls, fixed even within the veil, even to the God of all things, with whom we thus enjoy present and eternal fellowship. And well may the preacher, telling his flock such truth—well may he cheer and encourage them on! Well may he use freely that exhortation, "Rejoice in the Lord alway:

[d] Ephes. i. 4—6. [e] Jer. xxxi. 3.

and again, I say, Rejoice[f]." And well may he call for and join his own note to the full strain of thanksgiving—"O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation."

But in our text one particular object and end, which God has in appointing His people to salvation, is brought prominently forth. We might as well think of taking in by one single glance the whole number of the stars, lighting up heaven's expanse on some brilliant night, as of comprehending, in one gaze, all the benefits accruing to us from our salvation by Christ. Therefore the Word of God ever presents them to us distinctly, separately, one at a time, or, at least, only in a small cluster at a time. For instance, in one passage we hear of such and such a blessing, as ours by Christ's death — of a second, as ours by His resurrection — of a third, as ours by His ascension — of a fourth, as ours by His second coming. So, at one time, we hear of blessings for this world, gained for us by Christ—at another time, of blessings for the world to come. But here, in our text, the two are presented to our reception at once. In the one short verse of our text, which remains for investigation, there is an assurance both of rich privileges here and of rich privileges hereafter, all summed up in that expression—living with Christ. Yes! without doubt God's election is an election unto holiness here, as well as unto safety and happiness

[f] Philippians iv. 4.

in the world to come — to "obedience" not less than "to the blood of sprinkling[g]." And it is one of the purposes for which God our Father has appointed us to salvation, "that, whether we wake or sleep we may live together with Him." And let no one hear these words as mere doctrinal phrases, to which the ear has long been accustomed; but let each try to get into their meaning, by the Spirit's help; and, having got it, try to keep it and enjoy it, and use it for God's glory and the soul's everlasting benefit!

But to explain them a little more carefully. To "wake" here means to live a while longer in this present world. I first touch on this point. And I just ask you, What is the light in which the children of God, once converted to the Saviour, and once made really sensible of their debt to Him, ever afterwards regard their life? Not as their own, but as belonging to Christ, whose they are and whom they serve in thought, word, and deed. Every one of them will say, with Paul, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me[h]." Jesus is glorified in them, and they are glorified in Him. Jesus is present with them as He is not with the world, enthroned on their hearts, comforting them with His sympathy, upholding them with the arm of His power — revealing Himself to their inward spirit with the unfailing testimony of His love. He is

[g] 1 Peter i. 2. [h] Gal. ii. 26.

with them at holy ordinances, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them[h]." So they live with Him. He is with them in their solitude, so that they can ever say, each one for himself, in the sick chamber, or in some lonely passage of their life, "I am not alone, for my Saviour is with me." So they live with Him. He is with them in the hour of peril and temptation. He is with them in the hour of peace and prosperity. He shares their sorrows and their joys. As branches live by the sap ascending the tree, so the living branches of the true Vine live by their Saviour. As members of a body live by their head, so it is with the members of Christ's body, the Church. "Their life is hid with Christ in God[i]." He makes His abode with them, not only as their Friend, their Guardian and Defender, for this might all be said of an angel—but in a far closer, far more blessed union. He is "Immanuel, or God with us," one with them in His human nature — one with them in feeling — one with them in spirit — one with them in all things wherein there is no sin. O happy state of the Christian, even while remaining in this poor vile body! He lives together with Christ.

But the language of the text is —"whether we wake, or whether we sleep." *To sleep* here signifies to "die in the Lord." When Stephen was stoned it is said that "he fell asleep." Again,

[i] Galatians iii. 3. [h] Matt. xviii. 20.

of "the five hundred brethren," who saw the Lord Jesus at once, some were said to have "fallen asleep[k]," while the remainder lived on. But so far from this sleep—this death of the believer—separating him from Christ, it brings him, in some special manner, more into His immediate presence. We have already seen, that, in this life the Christian lives "together with Christ." But we are also told for a certainty that death shall "not be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord[l]." And we may advance even further still, in contemplating the things written on this matter—I mean on the life of a believer with Christ, commenced at that very moment when he departs hence, and his place on this earth knoweth him no more. There is a glorious meaning in those simple words, that to depart and "to be with Christ is far better[m]"—far better even than serving Him here. There is a glorious meaning in the Saviour's assurance to the penitent thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Yes! "Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord," because, as the Spirit saith, "they rest from their labours[n];" and though we have but little revealed of the exact nature of that rest, in comparison with what is revealed about Christ's second coming "and the glory which shall follow," still we know from God's Word, (illustrated too, in a measure, by the dying

[k] 1 Cor. xv. 6. [l] Rom. viii. 39. [m] Phil. i. 23. [n] Rev. xiv. 13.

experience of many and many a saint, if we will observe such things,) that, when the spirit is released from this body of sin and death, it goes immediately, in some special yet most real mode, to that Saviour, who not only gave it, but redeemed it, and made it His own for ever, for His glory and for our bliss, "that, whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with Him." I dwell on the word *immediately*. Alas! alas! that any Church should hold and teach the damnable doctrine of purgatory, as if the blood of Jesus did not and could not cleanse from every particle of sin, but fire was requisite to purify the soul — as if the departing believer was going, for a season, into a place of torment, and not to the bosom of his Saviour[o]. Let us earnestly repudiate all such doctrine, and all the false doctrines and practices of Rome: for they all hang together, and if we admit, cherish, favour or make light of one of

[o] The notion of purgatory may be found in the oldest heathenism, of which we have classical notice, viz. that of the Egyptians. In Virgil it is fully developed. Anchises presents it to Æneas thus:

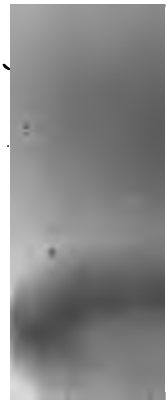
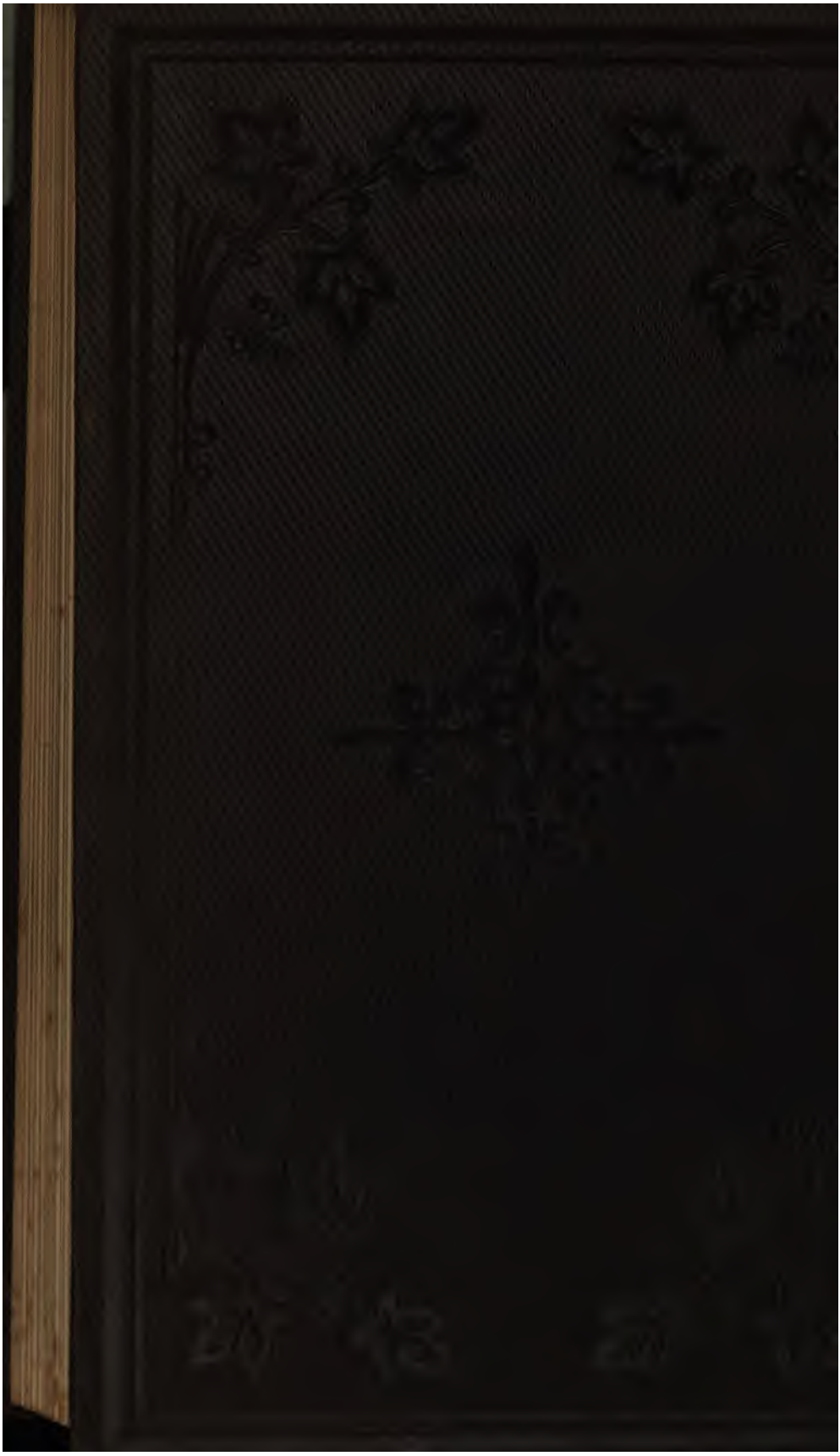
> Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumque malorum
> Supplicia expendunt. Aliæ panduntur inanes
> Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto
> Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni:
> Quisque suos patimur Manes: exinde per amplum
> Mittimur Elysium, et pauci læta arva tenemus:
> Donec longa dies, perfecto temporis orbe,
> Concretam exemit labem, purumque reliquit
> Ætherium sensum, atque auraï simplicis ignem.
>
> Æneid. vi. 738—747.

them, the dangerous leak is made, and the flood of all evil, spiritually, rushes in.

But I return to the subject which I left for a moment. I have dwelt on the mighty appointment of God, concerning our salvation. I have dwelt on the fact, that (through this appointment) we are living with Christ here, and shall live with Him hereafter—that, at our death, there shall be no break nor interruption, as to the life of our spirit, but, on the contrary, a blessed increase of joy, such as the presence of Jesus alone and exclusively can give. Now all these privileges are summed up and commended to our thankfulness in the very words of the Spirit: "None of us," (that is, true believers in Jesus,) "none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living[p]."

Finally, I would affectionately ask, whether you duly realise and feel these glorious truths. Do you make them your own, and apply them to your own life? Be assured that no kind of sermon is so practical, and so likely to be blessed to all those who hear it, as one telling of the high privileges vouchsafed to the true children of God by their Father and their Saviour. Such sermons, in the hand and power of the Spirit, must be a

[p] Romans xiv. 7—9.

word in due season to those who know and love the Lord; and many such a sermon has been the commencement and continuance of God's work in bringing His chosen out of darkness into light, out of the world into His family named after Christ. If therefore any one whom these words meet should be at all troubled and disturbed in his conscience, because he has heard the truths, now addressed to him, without a sense of gladness, assurance, and thankfulness to God for His infinite mercies in Christ, past, present, and to come—oh! let this be felt as a very gracious call from God, that he too should at once lay hold of that salvation which must and will give peace and joy—that he too should no longer refuse the offered gift, but take the outstretched cup of salvation from the Lord's own hand; and so have fellowship in all His goodness, in all His promises, in all His priceless gifts for life and eternity. But to others, who already live in the peace and enjoyment of the blessed Gospel, I would say—The foundation of your hopes has been examined once more. Once more you have seen it established on God's own appointment, which is sure for ever and ever. Be therefore full of peace! Be full of joy! "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Thus endowed, you will resist, you will defeat every attack of Satan, the world, or the flesh, which would interfere with your confidence in God's promises! And receive them as sent to you — even to you yourself — I speak individually — for our calling is to

believe in Jesus for ourselves, individually, and to be assured that, whether for life or death, we may fall before Him in all adoring love; we may say to Him, "My Lord, and my God." "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."